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THE GRAND ASSIZE

The Grand Assize

As Reported by a Humble Clerk

BY
HUGH CARTON, *pseud.*



"No man shall cry if I can help him."

— LIGHT OF ASIA

GARDEN CITY

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CHAPTER I

THE COURT

THE arrangements of the Court were simplicity itself, and the Royal Arms were deemed unnecessary in view of the character of the Judge. Out of respect for each defendant, whose trial was half conversational and partook of the nature of a private interview, there were neither ushers, police, nor any other indication of force. This was to avoid the horror of exposure, which is apt to defeat its object — namely, the essential truth. Still more striking was the wisdom which frustrated public curiosity and helped to minimise the self-consciousness of the men and women whose interests were at stake.

The dilemmas of each were treated with becoming respect, which created a confidence impossible before a crowd. The Judge had never at any time been seen by the accused, though between them there had been a mystic relationship often unacknowledged and, in most instances, stoutly denied. The lack of formalism did much to banish hypocrisy and perjury from the Court, each prisoner being his own accuser and being impelled

to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. No prosecutor painted his offence in lurid terms, but the conscience of each was relied on to set forth his guilt. Such thoughtfulness touched the oldest offenders, and the coals of fire thus heaped on their heads burned them into a purity so long trifled with that any save the Judge would have regarded it as irrecoverable.

The absence of vindictiveness was a surprise to culprits who had been accustomed to look on punishment as an end in itself and had spent their lives in striving to evade it. For years they had listened to truisms on the subject, but, though they had often excused themselves on the ground of inconsistency in those whose office it was to rebuke them, they had as often resisted their own conscience. They had found it a solace to remember that, since all were in the same boat, the affair could not be so desperate as alleged. The result was an admixture of terror and flippancy, a poor preparation for their ultimate trial, which completely differed from what they had been led to expect. There was no suggestion of an account to be settled, but the single aim of rectifying things appeared to predominate, and none could help subscribing to this or recognising its usefulness. The fact was brought home to each that their summons formed no portion of a cruel code, imposed by Omnipotence on the helpless, but that it was part of their evolution as designed by a beneficent Power.

The Judge's seat was on a level with that of the prisoner, the intention being to put the latter at his ease, though not for an instant could the most hardened have

taken any advantage. No witnesses were called on behalf of the accused, the counsel for the defence summarising all that could be said in his favour, as alone cognisant of the road which had led to the result. The emptiness of the room created an awe greater than any assembly could have inspired, yet, in spite of the silence, there was a sense of hope uplifting from the slough of despond. In short, the Court resembled a home, but the chances of truth were increased by the change, conveying an impressive lesson as to how the heart may be reached and human beings not so much driven as enticed towards honesty.

None of the prisoners need have appeared for actual judgment, and it should be made clear that only the self-satisfied found themselves in the dock. Opportunities of anticipating such a crisis by judging themselves had been constantly offered, and it was only after persistent refusal to make use of them that they were brought up at the Grand Assize. This may best be described under a metaphor familiar to those acquainted with ordinary criminal proceedings. The option is granted to many prisoners of being dealt with by the Magistrate rather than run the risk of the Sessions, which is virtually a gamble between liberty and a longer sentence, let alone the intervening comfort of postponement. In the case of those who abide by the decision of the Magistrate fear of further reprisals ceases just so long as his conditions are complied with. Each, however, is liable to be called up again by the same Magistrate as occasion arises. To all who loyally work out the

penalty assigned comes a peace beyond the understanding of its possessors, but unknown to those who decline the volunteered discipline. Others perpetually elude the summons, and still more skip their bail, preferring to chance a future which means less and less to them in proportion as they despise it, rather than be thwarted in the smallest detail.

The advocate for the prisoner was both strong and tender, being filled with compassion for the position of his client, and incarnating the special angel supposed to wait on every individual born into the world. All eloquence, save that of genuine pathos, was banished from the Court, and language was no longer used as a vehicle for distorting truth. For this reason the effect of speech was tenfold in its intensity, based as it was on a love which had never failed, and which could always find gold in the clay, though at times the particles were extremely small.

When the Judge took his seat there was no disturbance, and his entrance was hardly noticed. It seemed as though he was waiting on the convenience of the accused, and as if his object was to show greater honour to the parts of the body politic most requiring it. There was no sense of superiority, nor did he fail to display that respect for which ignominy thirsts. Everything about him was more positive than negative, like one who, accustomed to the light, looks on darkness as its absence, and endeavours to expel it by letting in the sun. There was no beauty in his face to make him desirable, and if aught about him might be called extraordinary, it was

that he was ordinary. He might have been any age, suggesting one who had grown old without ceasing to be young, yet with lines in his face and a depth in his eyes telling of an experience preventive of all surprise. He had evidently himself been through the fire, and you could be certain, before he spoke, that he was there not to condemn but to cure.

The humility of this kind figure was apparent, and if any had called him good, he would have been the first to say that the attribute belonged to no one except God. If credited with absolute knowledge, he would have confessed ignorance as to the final arrangements of the Creator, but, if in this respect more was assigned to him than he claimed, his love, at least, defied embellishment. From time to time he expressed his sympathy by a smile, nor was satire altogether absent, though it was employed more in the cause of saving than of revenge. He was at his best in his references to women and children, and when the latter were mentioned his countenance was irradiated with tenderness. His strongest desire was the consolation of the unhappy, and the air of mercy surrounding him was unspoiled by weakness. When he spoke his voice was in itself a correction, but its music brought comfort and hope, not only to the depressed but to the disgraced.

You felt that he had drunk of the cup, though whether on his own account or that of others none could guess. So much indeed had he identified himself with man as his brother that his talk was rather from the standpoint of "we" than "I," nor did he give the idea of shunning

the sinner, though his abhorrence of the sin was beyond question. There was no trace of preaching in his methods, nor did he once proclaim as news to the accused that it was his own fault. He also made a point of not adding to the agony, yet he achieved with infinite delicacy the task of revealing each to himself. In his presence there came an unexplained assurance that no skein but might be unravelled, no tangle but might be straightened out, no wrong but might be adjusted, no ruin but might be restored, no vileness but might be purified, and no anguish but might be banished by this good Samaritan who was strangely considerate to those who had fallen by the way.

CHAPTER II

THE PLUTOCRAT

THE dethroned puppet felt his position deeply, and suffered keenly from the contrast of his surroundings with those he had just left. He was in rude health, and looked about him insolently, as one accustomed to have his own way and to brook no contradiction. It was no small effort for him to accept the place of an equal, let alone a suppliant, while he was pitifully unconscious of the fact that, in the sight of the Judge, he was naked as when he was born. The general impression which he created was distasteful, there being a forcefulness and an air of dictatorship about him telling of habitual command. The poverty of the Plutocrat was calculated to touch the stoniest heart, and a more lamentable instance of self-delusion it would have been difficult to imagine. Added to this was his crass ignorance of the reversal of fortune and his inane conviction that he could still buy up the universe, including the Judge, whom he began by regarding as only another pawn in the game.

That he was to be cruelly undeceived none could doubt, but it was tragic to watch his arrogance and the Napoleonic air with which he surveyed the scene, as

though he had merely to press a button to summon a host of willing servitors. He failed to realise that he no longer possessed a sou, and that, so far as externals went, he was a pauper, dependent on his merits and on the clemency of the man who was to pronounce his sentence. To the Plutocrat, who had never been kept waiting, each moment appeared a century, and a lifetime passed before him, as happens to those suddenly brought face to face with death. When the horror of his situation stole upon him, his greatest enemy would have admitted that he was no longer a subject for envy, but for commiseration. The Judge was quick to see this and, conquering any antipathy he may have felt, greeted his unwilling visitor with quiet courtesy and a surprising absence of irritation. Though this was not without its effect, the accused struggled to withstand it and to resume the overbearing attitude of his entrance, having trained himself to resist inconvenient waves of emotion. He was soon, as he would have mistakenly called it, "himself" again, and assumed a confidence beyond belief to those possessed of an iota of reverence. It was a cause for thankfulness that there were no preliminaries likely to increase the tension, or to invite friction between two opposite forces at last brought face to face.

The Plutocrat rose, and, fighting to the end against the admissions silently extorted, stated his case: "Contrary to my previous experience, I have come here to accuse myself, not so much for my own relief, as by reason of an irresistible drawing. Hitherto I believed no power existed which could break me down, my aim hav-

ing been to break others down, and powder them into dust if they crossed my path. I here confess, still against my will, that I became the proudest of men, and that I seldom had any other thought than self-aggrandisement. My passion was power, and I stopped at nothing provided I could reign in my own corner of the world. Conscious as I was of few mental gifts, save those of cunning and lack of conscience, I understood that for me money was the only way of attaining my ambition; therefore for this I sold my soul rather than miss my mark or take a lower place.

“Many a time I alleged that it was not the gold but the gaining of it that interested me, and, after a while, I asserted that I had more than I could do with. But that this was not the case was conclusively proved if it came to a matter of giving anonymously, when I found it was an actual pain. I grew to regard the people as non-existent except for my own ends, and became insensible to the poverty, hunger, and wretchedness of millions, on condition that I could add to my private store. As for the rights of man, I trod them under foot, and gloried in the fact that my digestion was not affected by the fate of the masses. Avarice gripped me more tightly than I was aware; nevertheless I studiously maintained the appearance of a good heart, and became a proverb for geniality, lavishness, and a suppressed licentiousness which was treated with amazing lenience by the professedly religious. To be candid, I squared the latter by magnificent subscriptions. At times, jaded by finance, I dabbled in religion, finding a zest in the contrast

afforded by worship, and an actual solace in the message of the Gospel, without the least intention of bringing it to bear on the work of the week. The emotions of a poem not over rife on 'Change filled me with vivid satisfaction, but I was conscious that my presence brought a stain upon and endangered the spirituality of the churches which I supported.

"The Arts came in for my patronage. I rivalled Mæcenas in the splendour of my gifts to those in whom I detected a genius which I saw could be put to good account. I founded schools of learning that students might revere me, but I also fostered knowledge because it spelt strength, and because I desired that my nation should head the world. I scoured all countries for treasures through which my name should be glorified, and should be mainly known as that of one who had brought the *cheff d'œuvre* of mankind within the reach of the people. There was a method in my madness, this exploiting of the æsthetic adding to my credit, and disguising my ultimate design of adding to my personal wealth.

"I was careful to place those of whom I had taken advantage under such heavy obligation to me that no voice could be raised except in my favour. It amused me that I could create dread wherever I pleased, and that, when peace and war hung in the balance, statesmen should resort to me for advice, and still more for assistance. Socially I became a dominating force, though aware that bullion formed my sole attraction, and, mediocre as was my origin, I frequently entertained royalty,

my respect for whom, I confess, was hardly enhanced by their affecting my company. I cannot help adding, even here, that these occasions stand out among the supreme moments of my life, though for the existence of such folly amid my general astuteness I can give no logical explanation.

“For years my concentration on business was an asceticism, but there came a time when desires hitherto unknown, or starved by neglect, awoke with a force which brought me shame. Till then, however much I had sinned in the matter of money, I had been a sincere champion of morals, possibly because it was a considerable asset towards commercial success. To escape from this novel attack of carnality, I bought and bought and bought, but was increasingly bored. The company which I now cultivated, and the world to which I had the key, demoralised the best part of my being, and, having long considered myself safe as a financier, I found myself to be only, and very much, a man. I am still so far imbued with respect for my early training and for my father’s memory that, with your indulgence, I forbear to describe the depths to which I descended, or my association with iniquities for the abolition of which I publicly provided large sums, but not so large as to attract notice.

“In the earlier stages of my career I was so preoccupied with business that my affections were practically in abeyance, though my home life was without a flaw, and I cannot fix the moment when my happiness ceased to consist in enriching the wife who had been the angel

of my humbler days. Honestly I could never have conceived myself unfaithful to one to whom I owe more than I care to admit, but, driven in middle life from the paradise of purity, I underwent a torture with which none would credit me, and which, if once admitted, would have shattered the pedestal on which I stood in the eyes of the world. The nervous tension of this Jekyll-and-Hyde existence proved too strong for me, and I became a prey to a fantasy which undermined my obligations to my family, whom I treated with a combination of Cæsar and Santa Claus.

“My whole career was built upon sand. Times without number, had I not been phenomenally rich, I should have occupied a prison cell, but I continued to pose as a philanthropist, and left a name honoured by the race. My egoism reached its zenith when, in my will, I made it a condition not only that lands should be called after that same name, but that my beneficiaries should adopt it, if not already theirs, to the damage of their pride and to the loss of their identity. I went so far as to insist that they should change their religion for that which I had professed, and sell their God as the price of my favours. I made munificent bequests to charity, the number of institutions founded to perpetuate my memory being prodigious. Nor did I show any compassion for my heirs, conferring on them, without compunction, a curse which was bound to result in sloth or in the arrogance that had blemished my own character. This is the burden of guilt laid upon me to confess as I stand before the Court, accept its decisions, and throw myself on its mercy.”

There was a buoyancy in the advocate's mien and a light in his eyes which augured well for the defence, and made it clear that there were elements of genuine goodness beneath the acknowledged wickedness of the prisoner. "I rise, my Lord," he said, "to point out that the accused, according to the rule of this Court, has confined himself strictly to the worst side of his case. I am thankful that my task is to present certain qualifications which are none the less based on truth. From his infancy I have known him, and can recall how, as a child, he was full of piety and often planned a life of service and self-sacrifice on a magnificent scale. The career painted by him in such dark colours was by no means designed, but an unfortunate stroke of fortune awakened a latent covetousness of which I have seldom failed to find the counterpart, save in the elect. It may even be argued that without this trait the world could not continue, and that to it, in some shape, every external advance is due. Whatever the line my client had adopted, he would have been restless until he had achieved the foremost place, and though this catastrophe of success, on his own showing, degraded him, passages of undeniable merit occurred in his attainment of it.

"He worked harder than most men of his day, until he became a byword against indolence. In his own way he benefited and beautified the world, inspiring hundreds to develop their talents, and thus promoting the general welfare. Constantly, though it was not for him to say so, he used this money, however ill gotten, for drying

tears, and tides of genuine pity swept over him, resulting in actions of which none has ever heard. His piety, hybrid as it may seem, was the deepest part of his being, and he often found himself, when the sycophants had withdrawn, communing with Heaven under the stars, and wondering where he could find one friend. The knowledge of his own want of mentality made him lavish his fortune in dispelling ignorance, though this endeavour may have been smirched by the megalomania and interestedness of which he spoke.

"To no woman was he deliberately unkind, though he loved many, condoning it on the specious pretext that he had a greater heart than most. Only your Lordship can guess how deeply this man suffered, and I have watched him sobbing for very solitude at some revelry, or in some great gathering to do him honour. I grant that the will was as cowardly and tyrannical as can be imagined, nor can my love for him refute the charges he has preferred against himself in regard to humanity. I make no reference to the bequests, knowing that it is your rule to count them for nothing, which represents their exact cost to the testator. But, seeing how saturated all men and women are with greed, given the opportunity, and how easy it is to justify the means by the end, I claim not merely your mercy, but an adjustment of the scales possible only to yourself. This man had the money-making instinct to an unwonted extent; he was not constitutionally cruel. It is no euphemism to describe his special talent as skill, though I grant that it was associated with cunning, and we have it on record

that the greatest enemy of mankind was victimised by love of power, though originally an angel. The mutability of the accused and the hell through which he has passed are well known to me. His present emptiness is in itself an agony which instinct tells me your Lordship will take into account when you pronounce your verdict on one whose present misery goes far to pay the price of previous wrong."

Then followed certain questions put by the Judge to the prisoner, whom he addressed with the deference due to one who would have regarded its absence as a studied insult.

The Plutocrat, when asked whether he looked on the wealth which he had amassed as his own, or whether he had been actually dishonest throughout his life, declared that, had he not taken advantage of the ignorance of others, and had he not adopted certain sharp measures, he could not have laid the foundations of his subsequent fortune. Once established, possession had meant for him nine points of the law.

On the point of his humaneness, the Judge questioned the accused as to how it was compatible with the measures he must have employed to acquire his means of expressing it. To this the prisoner replied that, in what he called "business," he had made it a practice to best his neighbour and, if he interfered with his projects, not only to show him no mercy, but to raise himself on the ruin of his friend. Having no use for failures, he had felt no pity for the fool; not that he intended to fleece him, but that, being keener on the game than the goal, he had come to despise those whom he had defeated in

the struggle. Afterwards, when he was rich, he had been moved to play the benefactor on the principle of a sop to Cerberus, and to soothe his pangs of conscience by the relief of those he had impoverished.

The Judge having alluded to the advocate's statement as to his religious side, the Plutocrat showed signs of regret, and declared that his only peaceful hours were those spent in prayer. After such retirement he had more than once determined to ask that his case might be dealt with by the Magistrate, to show his books and to start fair again at the bottom of the ladder, but the price was too great, and the impulse had passed away.

Concerning his relations with women, he evinced a softness few would have expected, but it appeared that, so introspective had he grown in his search for gold, it became a mania to discover some one who loved him for himself. As a result, he had developed into the loneliest of men, driven to excesses in pursuit of some new sensation or some consolation to render bearable the desert in which he had condemned himself to live. He admitted having possessed the most loyal and devoted of wives, who had brought him the only unalloyed joy he had ever known, before his brain was virtually turned and he had become his own gaoler in his quest for liberty. No further allusion was made to his vicious proclivities, as being a personal affair, sporadic and foreign to the real man. They were also held to serve no good purpose by the President of the Court, whose experience led him to consider the very memory of them as more than sufficient martyrdom to a sensitive nature.

The Judge, then, with uncommon gentleness, asked him if he had been happy, to which the prisoner jauntily responded that at any rate he had done his best to be so, and, on the whole, he could not complain, but, in the end, unable to endure it longer, he owned to his wretchedness. He confessed that he would give the world to know the joy of honest labour and to earn his pay by the sweat of his brow, rather than continue in the splendour and falsity which he loathed, but from which he supposed he could never break free.

The Judge's summing up displayed a breadth of view, without laxity, rarely met with. He restrained an impulse to dilate on the contrast between riches and poverty, as though no end could be gained on that score by further aggravation. So courteous was he that he placed himself in the position of the prisoner, nor would any have inferred that he had known what it was to have no shelter and to ask for alms.

"I wish to thank you," he began, "for your confidence, though it has been extracted from you. You clearly show that this wealth of yours has by no means brought you what you expected. If it was built on even a questionable foundation, the entire fabric falls to the ground, with the result that none of it truly belonged to you except your early earnings. You have already been punished by the consequent satiety, and you now realise the stupidity of your striving. Though the public think you have got off lightly, you know this to be untrue, for you have had to undergo a private torment unguessed at by the stranger. I can corroborate

rate the evidence of your counsel, having taken note of every sigh, every prayer, and every act of kindness which you have often denied. Again and again have come to me those who look to you as the saviour of their lives, and I agree that, in a large measure, you have benefited humanity, furnished an incentive to action, and played your part in the evolution of mankind.

“I have gauged your isolation at home, where you acted the tyrant, to the concealing of your true self. I have heard the wail of your loneliness while you repelled those who would have comforted you, because suspiciousness made you like a sparrow on the housetop. I have marked, too, the anger of the crowd, many of whom had hardly bread enough to go round, while you flaunted in their faces a luxury and display which proved you thoughtless beyond words. This was not remedied by your attitudinising as a patriot and promoter of civilisation. Little did you dream of the epidemic of covetousness and avoidance of work in favour of quick returns created by the publication of your balance-sheets. At your door may be laid the suicide of many who, without your gifts, embarked on the same course, but, failing, found despair. It adds to your guilt that, though you piled up these millions, you were still able to say your Pater Noster and to assume a discipleship involving, if not poverty, at least moderation. You will see, without further emphasis, that, if such anomalies occurred in the natural world, starving dogs would soon make an end of one who heaped his kennel with bones and called them sacrosanct, under the name of property, because

the rest might have done the same had it been in their power.

“The most harmful aspect of your life, though, is your public mention of a Name which you should have kept to yourself, whereby you have done much to seduce a nation and to promote prattle on the subject of probity. How many curse you in secret, whether they have the right to do so or not, you will never know, and, though you were acquainted with the adage of the camel and the needle’s eye, you did obeisance to the golden image and fell down before it as your god. Forgive my righteous indignation, but the whip is more than warranted when Crœsus enters the temple and claims companionship with the Nazarene.

“You must learn that you were never so important as others led you to believe, and that the world would have gone on as well if you had not been born. Your excuse as to the circulation of money is another instance of your self-deception, your root mistake having been that you, and you alone, were the alpha and omega of existence. You falsely estimated what you could see compared with the invisible, while you basely misused gifts which might have been a channel for untold good. You would probably be the first to acknowledge that, in your case, success has resulted in failure, and though I well understand your advocate’s plea in view of your evident pain, I should not love you unless I decreed that you must continue to suffer until your entire outlook is changed. As to the lapse into a libertinage which caused you surprise, it is but natural that, having ac-

quired all the kingdoms through falling down and worshipping, you should have then become its easy victim. Small wonder that a man should seek romance in flinging himself from giddy heights, being sated with wealth which, to his still greater hurt, provides a mattress for the stones.

“Reparation to those you have injured is out of your power, which must add to your anguish, but the law of truth demands that you work out your salvation with fear and trembling on the reverse of the lines which have proved so disastrous. You will, therefore, leave this Court condemned to a life of that labour which you profess to desire, yet at the same time yearning to effect the material good which will now be out of your reach. You shall taste the pinch of poverty and, when your health is gone, you, too, shall be forced to receive gifts which will hurt your pride beyond endurance. You shall also know the pain of seeing those you love sick, without being able to give them comforts, and, tortured by their stress, you shall be tempted to steal. You, in your turn, shall watch from outside the luxury and waste of those who make thousands cornering markets, gambling in shares, and achieving fortunes in an hour.

“You will then realise that the world was not made for a few individuals, but for all, who are equally dear in the sight of their Father, and for whom He will never keep silence until they are treated with similar respect. You may be inclined to become an extremist in the opposite direction, but you will find relief in diligence. You

will go the length of championing the cause of the crowd, explaining that the removal of these offences and the restoration of justice lies in their own power, if they acquire the art of self-government and of co-operation for the common good. By this means you shall discover your real standing, and, when the true brotherhood has been revealed to you, you shall know by heart, and not by rote, the "Our Father" which your mother taught you long ago.

"You shall then be able to use this gift of yours, which amounts to genius, and which will remain to you, for the highest ends, but you shall express your generosity through the medium of the State without the harm of a single dole. To a man like yourself this restriction, though a bitter medicine, is necessary, owing to your innate vulgarity, lest personal giving of any kind should once more prove a deadly danger both to the donor and the recipient. As to 'being loved for yourself,' which was your radical quest, the crown of a great devotion shall be bestowed upon you by your country, since it shall have been earned by your love and your own right arm. Above all, you shall be able to indulge in religion without hypocrisy when your craving to be cared for shall have ceased to be, and you shall find your heaven, not so much in showering gold to the applause of multitudes, as in heart service. In this task your wife shall join you, and you shall be happy."

CHAPTER III

THE DERELICT

HE WAS at home directly, and lolled on the chair as if nothing mattered provided he had some sort of seat on which to laze. The only thing he missed was his baccy, but such a habit had chewing become, that his mouth moved like that of a cow, and he took about as much notice of what was going on round him. His face showed little or no pain, and he was not worrying so long as he had found shelter, though he vaguely wondered what kind of move this meant. His life, which had been one continuous waiting on events, caused him to take the next thing as it turned up, his rule being to turn up nothing on his own account. A lengthened residence in the open air had bronzed his unmanly countenance, and he was for all the world like an animal, without the passion suggested by the word. A better description of him was, a thing in humans, which made it exciting to watch whether the Judge would be able to bring what was out of what was not.

The Derelict, having condescended to take in his surroundings, remained equally unmoved, as the aspect of the Judge deceived him into thinking that he had

met another "softy" who would get him out of the fix. On his hands were few, if any, blisters, though his thumb and forefinger bore marks of which he had taken no trouble to rid himself. His eyes were by no means those of a drunkard, but they peered about as though hoping to find something on the floor which had been left by the last occupant. The most alarming thing about the prisoner was that he did not mind being one, and that between him and the ordinary embodiments of justice had long been established an unhealthy intimacy. This was the man whom the Judge had not only to break down (which was an everyday affair with the Derelict), but to build up, his task being to construct out of this mass of nothingness a living soul.

Meanwhile hardly more could be said of the prisoner than that he still missed his baccy, and was only too content to allow the Judge to proceed at his leisure, as at all events it passed the time. When he half stood up to make his confession, he was in a poor plight, having been a stranger for years to the notion of (as he would have put it) "splitting on himself." The interest of the case became manifest as he rambled on, till, before the end, a gleam of light revealed itself in the murky darkness.

"Why I am here," he said, "blow me if I can make out, and it is the rummiest go I have as yet struck. Up till now my job has been to make out I was right, but now it seems to be to tell you all about it, which the beak has generally told me. The idea of not making excuses seems a bit queer, so you will pardon me if I don't

take to it easily. I doubt if I have ever said I was sorry, or, if so, I have forgotten it. The fact is, I have always cared for my victuals more than for most else, and when I was a lad I often shirked school, but I found myself at home for meals. I never could abide book learning, but I was as cute as they are made, and if the master didn't know how I passed the Seventh Standard, I did, and I got the Scripture Prize, and chance it. My mother used to say it was the company I kept which brought me where I got to, but that's a bit off, and if I was always with a gang of idle boys, it was because I liked it and was born to be their leader.

"I didn't keep any of my jobs, and never learned a trade, but picked up what I could, and didn't care much how. Now and again I was mighty busy at what passed for work, if it was in the open and meant no study. I got to love the excitement of uncertainty, and put in some fine times, at least they seemed so to me. As I grew older I used to travel a bit to see the country, living on what I could get as I went along, and when I came back I made my pals jealous by the yarns I pitched to them of a larger world. When they asked me if I had found work, I scorned the notion, and let them think it was beneath me to soil my hands. I knew how to talk about it, though, and how to swell the crowds round a mob orator on the rights of the poor. I went on with this sort of game till I began to think my grievances were real, and by degrees I got the patter by heart.

"I spent several terms in prison, which, anyhow, I preferred to the workhouse, where I couldn't abide the

company, for you did get your meals regular in quod, you knew what you had to do, and, when you got settled down, it was kind of homelike. When I was there I became a bit of a hypocrite, and more than once spoofed the chaplain, which I begin to feel was a lower-down act than all the thieving outside. I was never found for violence, for I hadn't the pluck, but I just wanted to get along as best I could, granted I didn't have to make no effort. It's a bit difficult to say what it all comes to when you tot it up, but I had some good old times lying about in the parks, watching the kids, and reading the papers, of which I was terrible fond.

"If you ask me what happened to the others, it's ever so long since I heard of them, but I wasn't good at writing letters, except begging ones, which I was put up to doing at the doss-house and which turned out no end of a soft thing. I expect I felt pricks of remorse, but I knew they meant work, and as I wasn't having any, I choked them, though I liked hymns, and it was a treat to have a good cry. I have often sobbed over that chap who left his father and went it till the victuals ran out, and he had to feed on the husks they gave the pigs, but I do think it was a shame that no man gave him nothing when he was hungry, and what I said was, 'Poor fellow, not to be able to get a square meal after he had stood treat.' And I like the way the old governor fell on his neck and kissed him, and soon made it all right, but I was fair upset when he asked to be made like one of the servants, and I knew I should never have stopped, if it had meant turning to on the land after

the bean-feast. So I used to try and forget it, though I collapsed regular when I heard it again. But I didn't alter, not a little bit, and if you was to ask me straight, I still think it pretty hard on a chap to be put into this world to earn his bread. There's no good saying I am happy, for I'm not, and it's no good your giving me time, for I've had all that. What I want is a new sort of lay altogether, but even that's no good unless I start right over again, and if you can make a man of me, I'll thank you, but I ain't going to make no promises."

The advocate was more sad than angry, feeling that there were few arguments in favour of the prisoner, yet assured that the hopelessness of the story would appeal to the Judge. He knew the Derelict well, and though the latter had never acted on his advice, he had often asked him to tramp alongside him on the road. He had had long talks with him in his cell, and, however abortive the results, he had always visited him again when sent for, and each time thought that he was going to turn. Somehow he had grown attached to this failure, who had caused him sorrow rather than disgust at his absence of heart. When he rose to defend the Derelict his language was ultra human, though, conscious of the danger of being maudlin, he did his best to adopt the sterner side, and to remind himself of the law of sequence.

"I rise, my Lord," he said, "to plead for the prisoner, and the word exactly expresses my feeling. Defence I have none, but his very abjectness is a challenge to your charity. His far-off country yielded him no joy, nor can he be said to have indulged in riotous living,

since he had neither money to pay for it nor spirit to revel in it. The time he put in was as dull and weird as can be told. I maintain that he was not what is called wicked so much as slothful, though both adjectives were used in the case of one who hid his talent in a napkin. He hardly, if ever, had the remotest suspicion of harming any one, for with a disposition like his there was no one whom he could injure. As for doing harm to himself, he knew none but bodily discomfort. In regard to sloth, he was virtually born diseased, and, though he made it worse by not correcting it, the germs of it were in him to a degree which should disarm those who would too hastily condemn.

“No one can tell, save one who has been much in his company, how he grew to loathe the work, and to regard with contempt and shrinking the first axiom of his salvation. Though it may not influence his sentence, I would remark that the genus loafer covers a wider area than men pause to consider. Many there are, my Lord, who never do an honest day’s work, and who find it possible to live upon a woman, though the judgment of them is lenient provided the sum is large enough, and she wears a ring. Far cleverer, far wickeder, and far more guilty than the Derelict, they manage to pass a much pleasanter existence, without being accused of having visited a country farther off than that touched by the prisoner. I am aware that a thousand blacks do not make a white, and that my brief has to do with the case in hand, but I contend that sloth on a magnificent scale is largely responsible for the same vice on the lowest plane.

This man knew much of the emotional side of religion, and though it was beyond him to grasp its connection with ethics, he would never have found even a passing consolation in the account of the prodigal unless he had had within himself the elements of the wandering boy.

“I have often marvelled at his preference of the vilest weather outside to the work of the casual ward, but I have seen him more than once give up his seat to another wreck, and share with a dog as hungry as himself food bestowed on him by some kind soul. Once, on the stroke of midnight, when he had actually earned sixpence by holding a cab-horse, I watched him hand it over to a poor chap who would otherwise also have been out; I then knew for a certainty that my Derelict was not altogether bad. As I look at your Lordship, my hopes rise, not that I expect any petting, but because I rely on your love of restoring. So I leave him in the hands of the only person I know who, when he loves, loves to the end.”

The Judge treated the Derelict as a brother.

“Tell me about your home,” he said.

“You couldn’t have called it one.”

“What did your father do?”

“We never could quite make out, but he came home of a night.”

“And your mother?”

“She was a hard-working woman, at least she was always washing up, and when I think of it, she most usual was standing outside with her sleeves tucked up, talking to the woman next door.”

“Where was she when not taking the air?”

“At the ‘Spotted Dog.’ ”

“Was the home clean?”

“Well, there wasn’t enough in it to make it hard to keep tidy, for most of it was put away. My mother never went herself, but there was a woman at the top of the street who used to do that for the rest, at any rate when they was young.”

“Were your father and mother good friends?”

“They usedn’t to see too much of each other, but they didn’t fall out any more than the others.”

“How did you spend your evenings?”

“In the streets.”

“Where did you spend your Sundays?”

“In the streets.”

“What was your idea of Heaven?”

“The streets all paved with gold.”

“As you grew older, did you pretend to work?”

“Yes, I pretended all right.”

“Did you wear the clothes of a working-man?”

“Yes, I got up proper in corduroys.”

“Had you any friends among the working-men?”

“No, I never took to them much, nor they to me.”

“How soon did you become dishonest?”

“As long as I can remember.”

“Were you angry with the rich?”

“Can’t say I was so long as I could get anything out of them.”

“Were you touched by the sadness and misery you often saw?”

"Yes, I was that, but we were all in the same boat, and it didn't seem no good making a fuss."

"Did you envy men as you saw them returning home, happy after an honest day's toil?"

"Can't say as I did, though I knew they had the best of it."

"Did no one ever give you a chance?"

"Scores of times, but the best of them would not give me money, and I got tired of sermons."

"Did it strike you, as you sprawled in the parks, or lay on the benches, that you were a public nuisance, and that you were degrading not only yourself but your country?"

"I have often heard that style of thing, but tall-talk always turned me fair sick."

"Did you sometimes suffer because the children whose games you watched might turn out like yourself?"

"My God! I did, and I had a catch in my throat when I saw signs of it in some of them which made me feel that their number was up."

"Did you not know in your heart that, unless you turned to and by the sweat of your brow earned one day's pay, you were hopelessly lost?"

"Yes, I did know it, but I could not have done it for a pension."

"Couldn't or wouldn't?"

"Well, then, wouldn't, if you will have it, but such as you cannot understand such as me."

"That isn't true. Tell me how you felt as you grew older, and as begging became your second nature."

“I got not to feel at all.”

“What would you have called your happiest times?”

“Now you fair puzzle me, but it wasn’t bad when I had done some cove a good turn, though it didn’t run to what you might call happiness. You see if I did give anything, I’d most pinched it already, which makes all the odds.”

“Would you say that you had been embittered by your life?”

“Not a bit of it. They were all very good to me, they were, and I got fond even of them warder chaps, who seemed to sort of know my weakness and let me down proper.”

“How would you describe the world from your point of view?”

“It was a deal too kind to me, your Worship, or I might have been a better man. But it seems to me that we sort of chaps act as a kind of vent for the feelings, so in a roundabout way it would be a poorer place without us.”

“Should you like to go back to it?”

“What do you take me for?”

“If you did, would you do much the same?”

“What I says is, I want a fresh start, and if you could emigrate me to a different sort of place, that’s what I want. But you’ve got to change me first, your Worship, and if I got to Heaven itself sudden, I shouldn’t fly, I should just lie down and snooze, while the others took the message.”

“Have you ever loved any one?”

“Can’t say as I have, if you mean that kind of feeling which comes over a fellow and makes him look as if he’d seen a light, and as if he could never disgrace himself again.”

“Yes, I mean just that feeling.”

“Well, it’s never come my way; that’s all I can say.”

The heart of the Judge ached for the Derelict, and he resembled one who wept over a city because its inhabitants had refused to know the things belonging to their peace. He felt keenly the need of reconstruction. He knew that lecturing would be lost on the prisoner, who had long used it up, and perceived that he was already too religious. The poor fellow needed to realise that there were several other people besides himself, and, until some tiny seed of love was planted in his heart, all other methods, if not useless, were premature. The Judge was encouraged by the fact that there was less blarney in his answers than he had looked for, and as he knelt down to blow the smoking flax into a flame, he was grateful to think that it was not wholly quenched.

“Your sentence,” he said, “is bound to be a long one, though you may rest assured that it shall not become the routine which defeated the ends of your other punishments. Before you can learn how to work you must learn how to love, and for this reason you shall find yourself in scenes of suffering where you, and only you, can bring aid. In the early stages you may refuse, and you may turn your back on the task involved, by reason of ingrained habit. But the pity which, from time to time, peeped out of you shall gradually become your

master. Among the sufferers shall be children, and, when you carry them in your arms because they cannot walk, into your face shall come a new expression. As you gaze on these results of sloth in their parents, and as you serve them without pay, your eyes shall lose their furtive look and shall grow larger as the best tears you have ever shed flow down your cheeks. You shall become the servant of the aged and the outworn, who are deserted of all, and you shall fetch and carry for the imbeciles, till you find yourself singing the old hymns, but in a different key. Burnt into your being shall be the truth that you are part of a whole, and, when your heart is broken by it, you shall acquire sorrow for the waste of your manhood.

“Then will come a revelation which you could never have guessed. You will witness your former self as a curse to your country. You will be repelled by the thought of the blight which you became, and you will pray with your whole soul that you may repair the panic which you caused among those who watched you and were themselves on the verge of throwing up their hands. You will hate such cowardice, and the angels you see in your dreams will take on the form of the working-men who whistled as they walked, and whom you pretended to despise. You will at last see not only that men who do not work are worse than the brute creation, but that in work lies man’s supreme chance of renovation. Your incentive shall be to help the children and the old, amongst whom you slaved, at first with pain, but, later, because it became your prize. You shall go back to the

beginning and you shall have a new pride which makes it a crime to beg. You shall gain a distaste for deceit of any kind, and you will refuse to impress religion into the service of mendicancy.

“Whatever your resolve, the term is bound to be prolonged, and though my tenderness towards you is not wanting, you need a stick more than a caress. Be courageous. Think of the children. Go back to the streets which are still full of them. The time will come when, through a discipline which will never let you go from under its hand until its purpose is accomplished, you shall respect yourself. Some day, when there is an extra difficult job to be done, which no one will undertake because it is too dull, too uphill, too tedious, and because the only man who will do it is the man who cares enough to consider hardship a trifle, a voice shall be heard to say: ‘Here am I, send me.’ It shall come from one who was once a Derelict.”

CHAPTER IV

LA GRANDE DAME

THE lady found it difficult to adjust herself to the plainness of her environment, but was careful to preserve the proper languor and remoteness. She was disturbed to find that there was no gallery, and her evident trouble at the thought of the comedy which she had so long taken seriously was touching. Her whole air was superficial, and she was ignorant of the first principles of simplicity. Hardly a sadder situation could be conceived, caste and class having ceased to count, and the falsities of society being finished with. As she strove with excellent taste to accommodate herself to the change, her courage recalled scenes gracefully enacted under the Terror. The directness of the affair, the absence of the ornamental, and the fact that no chance was afforded of producing any effect hurt her severely. The contrast of the Court with that to which she had been habituated was painfully oppressive, so that, when she looked round in vain for the spurious supports conceded to prestige, chivalry was aroused for one suddenly stripped of the adventitious.

She was on the verge of tears, but her dignity came to her rescue, helping her to retain an unnatural calm.

Her *de haut en bas* expression would have been grotesque if it had not been pathetic, or if it had not been patent that the ground was rapidly being taken from under her feet. To the bulk of sane men and women the presentation of this superior being would have bordered on the ludicrous, the more so since she was oblivious that she was as much a back number as the Lama of Thibet. The prisoner still regarded herself as an important person, and the narrowness of her outlook augured badly for her contact with the catholicism of her Judge. Nevertheless no one could deny that she possessed an attractiveness traceable to the best pride and to a gentleness which told of years of training in self-suppression. It remained to be seen whether this was only veneer or whether it could stand contradiction, but, whatever the verdict, there was no fear that she would not accept it without flinching, or, to use her own vernacular, "in accordance with the traditions of her house."

"I am here against my will," she said, "though I acknowledge that it is a comfort to accuse myself of a past so unreal that I now fail to see how it ever allured me. It is stranger still how it held me so long, for it was insufferably dull. I have read much modern literature on the rôle of our set, which was sadly disrespectful, and evidently written by those who had not the private entrée, but I am compelled to own that there was more truth in those witticisms than I have hitherto allowed myself to admit. We were careful, as a rule, to avoid anything which might be termed comic, hav-

ing practised the pronunciation of prunes and prisms which makes me grateful for even this relief.

“The virus of the system entered into us from our christening, and even in the nursery we learned to strut, so that years before we made our bow to the world of fashion we had become little marionettes. Marriage was held up to us as the end-all of existence, and we were continually watched lest we should be natural or do anything that was not well-bred. Etiquette was a cult among us, though, from my present standpoint, we became inane as the result of our worship. Our parents, who were abnormally rich, took it for granted that their daughters would make suitable alliances. The question of love was seldom discussed, and I remember an elderly relation pronouncing it to be plebeian. For my own part (though whether the tendency was innate or acquired is beyond me to determine) had I been asked what appealed to me most, I should unhesitatingly have answered a coronet, with strawberry leaves for preference. Looking back, I marvel less at my parents’ ignorance than at my own crass folly, nor have I a shadow of excuse to offer for sentiments which I now regard as vulgar and despicable. I should of course have spurned the accusation, having been taught at least to pretend that such considerations were beneath my notice.

“All the girls in the family, strange to say, were equally correct, and, to use the language of our world, they did as they ought, which means that they did extremely well. To speak for myself, I knew, without

question, that I was doing despite to the instincts of nature and of conscience. The blame was the greater since I was gifted with a good brain, nor was it as if I had fallen into a trap, or been sold without my connivance. I had made up my mind that I was intended of heaven to adorn a great position, and, however much I may have been moved before my chance came, I carefully bided my time, regardless of any qualms I might have caused in others. These harmless sensations, indeed, served to ruffle the even surface of my days, and there was but little or no ache in the place where my heart should have been. The plan of my future *ménage* was deliberately thought out, nor can I deny that I was content with my bargain.

“The joy of existence spelt, in my case, an ambition for which I willingly sacrificed not only the claims of affection, but (a surrender I paid for still more heavily later) of knowledge, which, from the time of my choice, receded farther into the background. Not that our library was not one of the best, or that we neglected to have a supply of the latest books and reviews on the table, but many of the latter remained uncut, while the former was gradually deserted. When my prize came along I secured him without much difficulty, hampered as he was by an establishment demanding an heiress, and the arrangement was soon concluded. It would be untrue to suggest that I was deeply moved by fears for the future or regrets for the past. The prospect of my new grandeur filled my horizon, and I was too well schooled to make a display of feeling which

did not exist. The Church blessed the union with pomp and solemnity, but without questioning my motives or the state of my heart. As I see it by the light of to-day, I can imagine no instance of greater blasphemy or conspiracy to defraud than that wonderful wedding, which afforded talk for days, encouraged trade, and inspired many present to aim at the same goal.

“As for my duty to my new position, I doubt whether at first I gave a thought to the obligations involved, though eventually they formed the only part of it which made it bearable. Privilege up to the hilt was what I desired and what I meant to have, nor at the time did I care for much else except to become a great lady. As regards my marriage, I paid a price sufficient to satisfy my worst enemy, but I prefer to accept the fact and be silent. At least I never deceived myself in the choice of my life’s partner, and I cannot understand those who place on the shoulders of another the burden of a fault which at any rate ought to be shared. That my heart woke and had its revenge is not surprising, and each day I found myself striving, within the limitations I had invoked, to invent some new outlet for the emotions that I had denied. It is difficult to picture anything more tedious than the routine of my existence, but I consoled myself by every fashionable device for appearing busy and expending my energies, while remaining invariably correct.

“I found the poor my chief refuge, and in visiting them learned, almost to my awakening, what I had lost.

I grew to envy them, though they envied me, and many a time I wept in my boudoir when I recalled a mother crooning over her child. I even read by stealth a Book which I found in every cottage, and would have given the world to appropriate, but which remained to me Chinese, while to them it spoke in their native language. There were moments when I almost yielded, but, having learned some logic when I was a girl, I persuaded myself that, had I done so, I would have had either to retire from a place I had gained at the expense of my soul, or become a hopeless stumbling-block by my new profession in such a milieu. Little did the people know what had come to me through them, but the dilemma was too great for me to face, and, having made my own bed, I elected to lie on it.

“I reverted to the conventional when I returned to the world, and checked myself in the matter of religion, which I found incompatible, beyond a certain point, with the drawing-room and the Court. Thus my life was spent in display or entertainment or pleasure, all of the most approved description, though I found time for good works, and longed, as a peri outside paradise, to enter the kingdom of pain. At last I begin to see my senseless stupidity in having left no legacy behind me save that of an insipid and colourless story. Unaccustomed to sue for favours, I come here to state my case, and to pray you of your goodness so to judge me, that, by some means, however difficult, the soul which I bartered may be quickened, and that, escaping from these chimæras, I may find the Christ.”

The advocate was strongly moved by the recital of the prisoner's history, but, on rising, felt that he had by no means a hopeless task. "My Lord," he said, "I beg leave to assure you that the lady has not done herself justice, being still a slave to that good form of which she has freely accused herself. I know of few tenderer hearts, and of none more capable of natural love or girlish gaiety. Times without number that heart has gone near to breaking, without one complaint against those who so brought her up that the great mistake of her life was inevitable, but always holding that the false step was hers alone. Again and again, might she have had her way, she would have exchanged the ceremony and the glitter for a cottage on the mountain side (at least she thought so), but she played the game better than she has alleged, and, whatever her shortcomings, she never quailed.

"Her religious side was stronger than she has outlined, and, though the world in her withered her piety, she was more a woman of prayer than was ever guessed. Though she spoke of herself as outside the kingdom of pain, she suffered intensely in secret, and more than once would have thrown herself on the mercy of the Magistrate had she not been holden by pride. The passion of her heart was the welfare of the masses — the last thing of which she would have been accused; but the contrast appealed, and she yearned to do them a kindness without conferring an obligation. Her own awkwardness in this connection was a grief to her, but, try as she might, she could not escape from being

artificial. She hated the distance which her own selfishness had placed between them and her, but whether she would have diminished it the better to express her caring is known only to your Lordship. I put it to you that the gradual congealing of a generous nature, almost strangled by convention at its birth, was largely attributable to the sphere in which she moved. She might have become human save for her parents and for the crowd of satellites who spoiled her, and I wish to emphasise the point that, however else she failed, she was a rigid enemy of laxity of morals.

“I would ask you, then, to deal leniently with her perverted judgment, which was causative of what followed, but which can be readily understood, considering the bait dangled before her eyes from childhood. Since she had persuaded herself that there were few higher functions than service to the Throne, royalty became for her a talisman, but she did not grasp its mystic lesson or the largeness of its application. She considered to be on duty actually sacred, nor was it surprising that, through dwelling on ceremonials, she came to imagine that she belonged to another order of beings. This was not her chronic condition, and so contrary was it to the age in which she lived, that at other times she wondered how long the farce would continue. The pathos of her inward conflict would unman me were I pleading to any other than your Lordship, but, though much of her story is contemptible, I would argue that its ground colour partakes largely of the humorous. Knowing her as I do, I can testify that she was more

victimised than harmful, and I cannot but feel that her heart is destined, by a process of expansion such as you alone can advise, to fulfil itself on a scale worthy of her silent longings."

The Judge's tone was sanguine, though his eyes quivered as he spoke with the accused, reserving his sentence. When he questioned her as to her girlhood, she answered that it was spoilt by lack of surprise, and that her enjoyment was cloyed by excessive indulgence.

Asked as to her education, she owned to having had the best teachers that money could command, but the result was a smattering intended more for show than for excellence in any special subject.

When the Judge tried to discover the best moments in her early years, she replied the days when she was taken to a children's hospital, or when, dressed in the simplest clothes, she was allowed to scamper on her pony to her heart's delight.

At the enquiry if she loved her suitor, even at first, a sadness came over her, and she began to dream of things which might have been.

When the Judge referred to her attitude towards the society into which she had entered at her marriage, her frankness was striking as she said that, on this count, she felt guilty of theft, since she had not given her heart for what she had gained, and had therefore given nothing.

The mention of her children revealed the mother up to a point, but when the Judge desired to know whether she would prefer them to be brought up in simplicity, she winced and candidly owned that, though she knew

her answer to be illogical, she still wished them to possess the honours which had been responsible for her own failure.

On being examined as to her remoteness and her pretensions, which betrayed a grievous lack of ordinary courtesy, she confessed that the habit had grown upon her imperceptibly, but that, in such a presence, she could only feel it to be a gross impertinence.

When the Judge alluded to the people, especially to the suffering women in whom she was interested, her tears began to flow, and the real person was disclosed. Even then she confessed that she could not see her way to forego the ridiculous dignity of her state, but that she would willingly supply funds to those who would act as almoners on her behalf.

Asked whether she did not deem it an inconceivable waste of time to spend the few years allotted to her in constant ceremony and unlimited attention to the dress-maker, the Grande Dame admitted that, from her new point of view, the folly, apart from the extravagance, amounted to a sin.

When the Judge sought to discover her relations towards the women of her day who strove to raise their sisters by every means in their power, and, often enough, at the expense of all they held dear, her answer was that she had frequently condemned such people as common, though inwardly conscious that their ideals were true, but, if realised, would sweep away the privileges which she enjoyed.

As to her connection with hospitals, bazaars, and the

general rôle of Lady Bountiful, the prisoner naïvely stated that, for the most part, she was intensely bored. Nevertheless she felt that, unless she went through them, her position was in danger, and she regarded them as delicate sops to what she called “the lower classes.”

Here the Judge, with the faintest suspicion of annoyance, asked how she dared to indulge in such language, to which she responded that she supposed it would take a long time to get it into her brain that she was of the same flesh and blood as common folk.

When in conclusion he enquired if she had ever felt intense since she had given herself over to formality, she allowed that she had had visions of the heroic now and again, but that she had shut them out lest they should flood her world with light and show up its gruesome hollowness.

The Judge was disappointed at the hold which custom had gained over this poor lady who so soon contradicted many of the softer spots of her confession, and found himself mainly thrown back on the pleading of her advocate. But, mercifully for her, he saw beneath appearances and, in pronouncing his sentence, displayed a wisdom and knowledge of the world with which few would have credited him.

“It is not for me,” he said, “to increase your distress, and I will only remark at the outset that I cannot imagine anything more fatuous and unwise than the planning of your life. The harm which you and those answerable for it have done is greater than you can measure, or ever intended, and little can you guess the thousands degraded

by your desecration of the name Love. With your real need of affection I know that you have been more than punished in expelling the best, and in mistaking paste for jewels. I wish to bring it home to you that countless women through you have wrecked their lives and become infected with the same vulgarity. Here there is no question of titles, which some might be disposed to uphold on the pretext of having something to live up to, though reason would suggest that that is applicable to all; but unless a marriage is undertaken for love, and love alone, the person concerned has sold her body and done despite to her honour.

“Your subsequent faults are a natural result of, or at least allied to, your initial error. At the back of your failings is the lack of that very refinement of which you bought the letter, and, in the purchase, sold the spirit. You may take comfort in the certainty that the truest part of your nature is that side which loved the children’s hospital and the freedom of the outdoor life, with its absence of self-consciousness or of the world.

“You and your exclusive circle need to learn that, though in numbers you are a negligible quantity, the evil of accentuating and developing snobbery cannot be overrated. Avoiding as you do personal touch with the crowd, whom you look down on as belonging to another creation, you are apt to forget the wrath at such an insult which may overwhelm them, and the red ruin which may follow in its train. In a sense you make it more difficult to believe in the Gospel than does the courtesan, and when you speak of desiring to find the Christ, you forget

that He is acclaimed such because He was the Friend of publicans and sinners. You seldom pause to consider how human nature battens on the tale of a glamour which you affect to despise, but which you have no intention of foregoing. It would seem to have escaped your notice that the hungry hate you while they fawn on you, and feast their eyes on tiaras, which you will concede are out of keeping with the vein of sympathy permeating your admissions.

“It is still more trenchant that this is no corollary to your condition. There are those of your class who have been reckoned among the sweetest women of their day, and who, accepting privilege at its proper worth, have helped to gladden and humanise the world. Such exceptions have made the Gospel lovable, and, being too refined to think over much of circumstance, have left the impression that their main concern was the sisterhood. This obtained, however, in spite of their surroundings, and cost them an isolation in the world of fashion as the unvarying price of their consistency. No one understands this better than yourself, and, in brief, its lesson is that, if you desire to expiate your mistakes, you must first realise that you are extremely small, that you have been persistently self-indulgent, and that only through a course of self-violence can you truly become a Grande Dame.

“Your sentence, therefore, is that, however long it may take you (and you have only yourself to please), you shall have no rest, and you shall know no peace till you have discovered the secret of tenderness and the courage

of sincerity. You shall find yourself in the same position which your ancestors occupied before their fortunes came to them through means which cannot bear too close inspection. Though this may surprise you, therein lies much of the accumulated insolence with which both your families were impregnated, and which expressed itself in your career, picturesque, elegant, and, to a certain extent, pious as it may have been. You shall, for the future, be unimpeded in the development of your being, and the best in you will have a chance of flourishing under the primitive conditions for which you profess to pine. You shall live in the midst of trouble and pain which only sympathy can alleviate, and it will be a hard and a toilsome road, since you will carry with you the recollection of the past.

“Your children must fight their own battles under the disadvantages which you have brought upon them, and which you would not alter if you could, but their mother shall experience a joy which the world can never give, and which she alone can bestow upon herself. You shall be known as one who saw to it that none should ever accuse her of timidity, or even prudence, in a great cause. You shall rejoice in an ecstasy from which you have hitherto been debarred, and you shall at last know the thrill of being yourself, without fearing to forfeit your dignity in the excess of your devotion. Let me console you by saying that, with your disposition, the time will not be long, but that, in the words of your advocate, you are meant to accomplish an infinity of good. A radical change is involved, but I know you too well to

think you would wish it otherwise, and your staying power will serve you till you achieve, not the false, but the true nobility. You will have found the key to the Book which was open to the peasant, and which speaks of a crown, but one of thorns."

CHAPTER V

THE YELLOW PRESS

AMORE than ordinary collision between good and evil was in the air. Though the presence of the Judge expelled despair, the face of the accused brought it perilously near. It was difficult to suppress a desire that the trial might be concluded with no delay, and that this Augean stable might be cleansed at the hands of one stronger than Hercules, but whose love surpassed that of women. The puzzle was to discover anything worthy in the prisoner, and faith in the divine spark latent in all was severely tested.

Again and again the effort had to be made to think of him as part of a vast machine, powerless in himself, and carried away by a stream no human strength could stem. What could be his private life? Had he children? Did he know aught of those endearments which go far to soften the cruellest characters? To such questions there was no answer, and it was hard to evoke an atom of pity for one who appeared as adamant. The influence of his personality was inimical, breathing the atmosphere not so much of the criminal as of the cynic. As for the veriest gleam of repentance, he had none, and, even at such a crisis, was more on the lookout for "copy" than

occupied with the thought of the Judge, whom he altogether failed to appreciate. The absence of business or movement evidently tried him, and he chafed at the waste of time. He missed the cables, the telephones, tape machines, and host of reporters which had become his daily food. After managing the affairs of the world, it struck him as monstrous that a moment should have arrived which was concerned with the management of himself. But he took it all with perfect sang froid, and adopted the usual bluff of one accustomed to tight places, doubtless expecting to convert the incident, as of old, into another gigantic and stupendous scoop: "GOD AND THE YELLOW NEWS, EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!" immediately suggested itself.

He was constrained by the same irresistible force which affected all arraigned, and his action was that of a paralysed man, whose limbs moved in a direction contrary to his will. His initiative was palpably diminished when he found himself reduced to the condition of crystal. Without the slightest deference or shame as to his situation, he rose and, in a metallic voice by no means in his favour, addressed the Judge:

"I find myself here, apart from any desire of my own, for a searching audit, so would express a hope that you will restrict the business to reasonable limits, as I rebel against this detention. Kindly note that the confusion due to my absence will cause much inconvenience elsewhere." (The accused was still under the impression that the end of the world would come if he were removed from it.) "The terse description of my dossier is that I

set myself to exploit the earth and, by hook or by crook, to use the same for my own purposes, playing it, as one would a fish, with every variety of fly which might attract.

“Where or how I acquired the art, or, as many might prefer to call it, the knack, is not important, but I congratulate myself on being very much up to date. My early enterprises were comparatively modest, as I realised that the public had to be gently educated and accustomed to the garbage which by degrees became their necessary pabulum. I knew they had been previously reared on healthier food, but I set myself to spoil their palate, insisting that my sole desire was to satisfy their natural appetite. Though the confession savours of brutality, I flatter myself that I made them want it. When the mischief was done, I emulated Pilate in the washing of my hands, and regretted that I was forced to supply their needs.

“There was not a sensation in human nature to which I did not pander, and I made it a point that my countless readers should be liberated from the trouble of thinking. Covetousness I roused without any qualms, dilating on the glory of gold, supplying stories suggestive of Aladdin’s lamp, and pointing out how every one could find it by reading my journals. I stirred up discord between Capital and Labour, master and man, feeding the strike-fire with the fuel of dissension and hatred. By being ultra patriotic I lashed the people into a paroxysm of fury with their neighbours across our frontiers, and constantly did my best to plunge nations into

war. The thought of the wreckage bound to follow in its train, which could never have happened save for the deliberate misrepresentation of the foreigner by myself and those of my kidney in the opposite camp, failed to touch me compared to the prospect of an enormous increase in our circulation.

“To foster the lower instincts was a prominent part of my programme, and on such subjects as murders, horrors, accidents, fighting, crime, and brutal contests, under the heading of sport, we outvied all other publications in the pungency of our descriptions. Finding that divorce news was acceptable, our numbers could never be accused of lack of intrigue, innuendo, or tasty reference, over which the prurient might gloat and become eager for the next issue. The enjoyment found in this exposure of the skeletons of other people was self-evident, and was accompanied by a cheerful carelessness for the sorrow and shame caused by such publicity to those concerned. As for the real interests of the world or the religious side of life, we took care, now and again, to notice the melodramatic, so as to impress the masses with the idea that we were deeply affected by higher things, but in this connection our space was curtailed.

“I confess that there is something about your presence that makes me shudder at the possible result of my ventures, and I am coming to the conclusion that few have been so callous in poisoning their generation. At the time, however, it was a joy to me that I accumulated my thousands out of the coppers of the people, to say nothing of such side issues as our connection with

company promoters or with social enterprises on the part of those not as yet arrived. We did a good trade blackmailing many who were hopelessly in our toils and were ready to pay any sum for our silence. Yet I trace our main success to the murder of thought, to a combination of levity and lewdness, and to a careful admixture of the sentimental with the sensual, whereby we obtained a satanic empire of our own, until we prided ourselves that the world could not do without our wares. In a word," said the prisoner, who was on the verge of a collapse, but who, with a supreme effort of will, managed to regain his self-control, "I own without remorse that I have sinned successfully, that the whole scheme originated with myself, and that I now await your decision as to the future."

The advocate's position was an unenviable one as he stood up to make his speech. The astonishing thing was the perseverance of his love for the accused, and there was a look of pain suggesting wonder lest he had failed at times, through a natural shrinking, to fulfil his office of protector and guide. He was comforted by an upward glance at the Judge, as he called to mind the quickening by Love of one who for four days had been an object of revulsion.

"Conscious that I have but little to say, I make a special appeal to your Lordship's mercy in a case where the powers of darkness have made a peculiarly terrific attack on a weak mortal. It is not for me to argue as to the inequality of the onslaught, knowing as I do that, had his eyes been opened, he would have seen that the

hosts on his side were greater than those by which he was threatened. Your charity will take it into consideration that he may be classed among those who were born blind. I find it hard to explain or apologise for one item of his cold conceding, though it is my duty to point out that, even in his professional work, he found space for the children and the unfortunate, being overcome by attacks of generosity and kindness. Your obstinate hopefulness, my Lord, alone prevents me throwing up my brief. For the rest, I believe silence to be my best course."

The face of the Judge was set like a flint, but with his evident condemnation was blended compassion for the unhappy man on whom he was about to pronounce judgment. He, too, had plainly not forgotten the incidents which had flashed across the mind of the advocate, and at such a time it was consoling to feel that his nature was proof against embitterment. Restraining himself with a visible effort, he treated the prisoner with special courtesy, as a man is apt to doff his hat in the presence of a ruin. To a person like the Judge the story to which he had listened brought nothing less than anguish, not so much because of the sordid love of gold which it breathed as of the ruthlessness manifested throughout. He was thinking of a type which had best be relegated to the sea with a millstone round its neck, but none knew better than he that thousands would be only too ready to step into the shoes of the offender.

The cowardice of the transaction was repellent to this most guileless of men. Its treachery recalled the figure

of a serpent, under which the arch enemy of mankind has been known since the world began. In nearly every instance brought before him there was at least a certain risk to the agent, but the man with whom he was now dealing had done his deadly work in the background, and had shot his arrows from behind battlements. This wounded him to the quick, but between him and too hasty censure rose up the master mystery of election and the truth that "a man was a man for a' that."

"I have been wondering as you spoke," said the Judge, "how such a diabolical idea as that which gradually took possession of you came into your head at the outset."

"So far as I can remember I had cruel tendencies as a child, and was brought up in a home where each had to fend for himself, so I suppose it made us all more or less smart, and careless of the others."

"What was the actual condition of your parents?"

"I would rather not say, but I remember being filled with the desire to alter my mother's position, to add to her comforts, and make her a lady. My success came too late, and this was the fly in my ointment."

"And your father?"

"I think we will let that question alone, please, as we were never great friends."

"How did you get on with your brothers?"

"I don't know that I cared much about them at the time, though since then I have done them plenty of good turns, much as the Corsican added to his glory by making several kings in his family."

"Had you any sisters to soften your life?"

"No, and I daresay it might have made a difference, but our youth was a pretty hard one, and affection was a minus quantity."

"And your schoolfellows?"

"We had to put up with a cheap school, as our father had brought us down, and we rebelled against it. When I was still a lad this filled me with spleen, and I swore that I would have my revenge when I grew up."

"Would you say that this explained much of your subsequent brutality, which is the only word I can find to describe your methods?"

"I fancy it must. I can recall gnashing my teeth when a four-in-hand passed and I knew that my invalid mother had to go short."

"Has the scope of the wrong you have done, and the demoralisation of your country by your actions since, come home to you?"

"It stands to reason that I cannot see this in a moment, and if it had been apparent, bad as I am, I should have shrunk from such a consequence. I begin to realise the magnitude of my offence, though heaven knows I never took it in before."

"Can you suggest any excuse for this murder of thought which formed so great a part of your schemes?"

"When I was quite young I began to look on humanity as merely a means of making my pile and leaving the world one of its richest and, if possible, one of its best-known men."

"Did you never quail at the thought of the boys and girls who were thus rendered unable to face the tedium

of home or to lead anything like a regular existence, becoming dependent on the false excitement with which you continually fed them?"

"Again I doubt if I ever considered the matter. All I knew was that, judging from myself, the trick was to make it appear like a show and to avoid such dry subjects as virtue and duty, both of which I hated on my own account, and credited others with the same instincts."

"Did it not appear to you nothing less than devilish to make capital out of others' shame and to expose what, in your own case, you would wish to be buried in the depths of the sea?"

"By the time I arrived at this point my heart must have been more or less dried up, and, so long as our sales went up, I cared not a fig who went down."

"Were you socially ambitious?"

"In a way, yes, but, whatever honours came to me, I was out of my element in refined company."

"How do you think you will go down to history, an expression suited to your pretensions?"

"There will be a blank page."

"What would your mother have said, if she had lived longer?"

"Here at last you have done me. Thank God she went early, so that she did not witness my triumph, which she would have regarded as a defeat compared to remaining in my own class, doing honourable work, and being able to look the world in the face."

"Are you sorry?"

“What is the good of being sorry now, just because I have no chance of doing the same again? But you have made me want some sort of sentence which shall bring back my self-respect and, however crushing it may be, shall cause my heart to live, since, brute as I have become, I would rather have one kiss from that mother than all the thousands gotten at the expense of my public.”

The wisdom of the Judge, which, by kindness instead of abuse, had brought the prisoner to the point that he desired, was little short of miraculous.

“I am filled,” he said, “with deep sorrow for your case, as much on account of the ruin you have caused as on your own. That evil abounds and that it plays havoc amongst men none can deny, nor can I explain it myself; but of one thing I am convinced, namely, that never has there been a human being but must have heard a whisper warning him at the start that he was wrong. Else I should not have occupied this seat, nor undergone the training necessary to sympathise with the most tragic instances that might come before me.

“You will forgive me if I lay stress upon the nefariousness of your trade which allowed you, from masked batteries, to achieve the destruction of your fellowmen. It baffles me to understand the villainy which became your delight. The more I ponder over what is perpetrated by you and your tribe, the more it is laid upon me to intercede that such baseness may have an end. Not that I believe you considered too nicely the injury you were doing to others, so long as you benefited your-

self, and no one between whom and his mother there was the relationship of which you have spoken could have been wholly bad.

“Though I have extracted more than one concession from you, I doubt whether you have as yet taken in the extent of the evil. Little do you know how you have soiled your generation and have introduced into the world a new set of temptations which hardly existed before you were born. The retrospect of having lowered the standpoint of millions must be ghastly to contemplate, and perhaps the most scathing sentiment I can express is that you have added to the difficulties of piety, and rendered prayer a subject for scorn. You have been the enemy of the young, though you assumed the rôle of their friend, but when, through being brought up on your productions, they have acquired habits which landed them in hell, it is people like you who ought to pay the bill.

“You have asked for a sentence which shall restore to you the childhood you have forfeited, and shall in some degree atone for the egregious wrong you have committed. In this you shall be gratified. You need a period of passiveness, since all activity must for a while be both fatal to yourself and injurious to your neighbour. Nothing short of this can so chasten your personality as to make it usable without harm to the community, and you must yourself cry out: ‘Give me milk,’ like a sick girl, before it will be safe for you again to dispense food for the brain. An intense desire shall come to you to raise the world in proportion as you have degraded it. You

shall find yourself filled with a craving for souls whom you shall daily witness under the dominion of the forces you have called into being. You shall watch the mark of crime on the faces of first offenders, due to the stuff which you have purveyed. You shall be called to console many bowed down through shame at the disclosure of some family disgrace, and your heart shall be broken in your struggle against the same cruelty which stamped your own career. You shall guess at the hell which you have contributed to fill, and you shall find yourself powerless in proportion as you have become a stranger to gentleness or love — the only weapons of any value in this campaign.

“There is for you no other way, though you have made it a steep and stony one. Until you have ceased from avarice and until you have tasted some of the desolation caused by the abuse of your talents, you cannot know even the commencement of content. It is no pleasure to me to inflict on you such pain, but, foreseeing the result, it is my part to show you that only by godly revenge can you regain your virtue or achieve your goal. That you will arrive there I have not a vestige of doubt, and in its pursuit you will discover the true value of your creativeness and your exceptional power, which I pledge you shall have their full fruition. Nothing shall daunt you in your new venture, and you shall thank Heaven for the roughness of the path which it will have become your joy to travel. No pardon can in itself confer a habit or alter a nature, but from the place where each left the right road he must start afresh and negoti-

ate what remains. Be happier, then, than you have been since you were a boy, guided by that star of your love for your mother which will serve you in the darkest and the longest night. Nor need you have the smallest fear but that, by the discipline which I have outlined, you shall become an advertisement of God's goodness. Though the world may have had cause to hate you, you shall win her smile."

CHAPTER VI

THE PHILISTINE

A WELL-GROOMED, thoroughly healthy, and uninteresting person took his seat, and some mistake was suggested by his presence in such a scene. Not that he would not have been called a good fellow, a white man, a sportsman, and similar terms, but his future was the more alarming since there was nothing to go on. He left a sense of weariness, though an importance was added to the figure by reason of the multitudes who resembled him. Given a body, a tailor, and a certain background, little more was needed for his construction, and he set the onlooker searching for that *tertium quid* which differentiates the human from the most attractive members of the animal world. The whole thing was appallingly meaningless, and the Judge himself was likely to be hard put to it to save the situation from bathos.

The attendance of this well-favoured, rather vacuous, but withal nice individual at a trial fraught with eternal issues would have been grotesque, had it not been significant. A certain annoyance was caused by his good looks, which implied nothing, and the entire lack of sorrow in the Philistine was calculated to increase the

sentiment. Of all this the accused was blissfully unconscious, and his aimless glance failed to take in its true import. The Philistine was mainly concerned with the fit of his coat, the colour of his socks, and his general get-up, which made his world. It was hard to think of him except in batches. One recalled crowds like him in the Park, or on a morning when the scent was good, or gazing out of some club window with the same imperturbable smile. All said and done, it was a miserable spectacle, more especially in view of the false romance woven round him and his ilk, only to result in a fateful fatigue, and often followed by desperate deeds due to sickening disappointment.

“I should like to remark,” he began, in the pleasantest way, “how good it is of you to receive me so charmingly, as I have often heard of you, and they tell me you are a topper in your own line. Please don’t think I mean anything disrespectful, but that is a form of compliment where I used to live, don’t you know, with all the other fellows. I fancy I am here to sort of reveal myself, but the fact is I am a reserved kind of chap, and have been taught to keep all that style of thing to myself, don’t you know.” (Here the Judge asked him if he would kindly not use the last phrase more often than was necessary.) “Oh, certainly, I beg your pardon, I am sure. You see I am not much of a speaker, but, since I knew my turn was coming on, I have been trying to collect materials, and have cudgelled my brains to find out what sort of thing I ought to say.

“I feel sure you won’t be over hard on a fellow who has

spent his time mostly in the open and whose reading has hardly been what you might call deep. My life on the whole has been decent and comparatively clean, for I was brought up awfully well, and could never get rid of some instinct implanted by my mother. There was no call for me to do anything particular, you see, but for the most part I steered fairly straight, believed tremendously in exercise, and, in a rough and ready way, aimed at being a 'white man.' I can't say I allowed this to interfere with a bit of pleasure now and then, or that, if it meant a biggish effort, I took it too seriously, but it became a part of my vocabulary and I constantly trotted it out, especially to the admiration of my women friends, who didn't understand it, but thought it very fine.

"I saw most of the globe, or, rather, the surface of it, and there were uncommonly few tricks I passed, but I made it a rule never to neglect my health, as I believed we were sent into the world in order to keep fit. I fancy I must have done some good turns, if they came my way; anyhow, I cannot call to mind any bad ones. What I liked about the business was that I had an unlimited number of friends, who were also awfully fit, so there was no strain or high-falutin' nonsense, which might have made me ill. I also took great pains about my food, holding that this item was exceedingly important, and that a gentleman should always know how to order a good dinner. Later in life I settled down, and am glad to say that my wife, also, was uncommonly fit. In a way we were awfully happy at first, but that

kind of thing palls after a time, and I don't think I was ever built for staying too much at home.

"I liked the people on my place more than I knew till I had to say good-bye, for there was any amount of good sorts among them, so that we became real pals. The delightful part of it was that there was scarcely any bother, as there was always enough to go round. We all had a turn for the same kind of things, so there grew up a good fellowship which was about all we wanted, and made the time go like lightning. I need not dwell on the temptations which come to a man with any go in him; I managed them pretty carefully. As the Missus knew nothing about them, and I still kept in with the neighbouring clergy, who were capital fellows, though not as fit as they might be, I expect you will agree with me that it is absurd to pull a long face over trifles.

"I don't suppose I was ever dishonest in my life, but I can't say what would have happened if I had been in a tight place. I hope I should have played the game and not forgotten the class to which I belonged. I was a strong advocate of patriotism, and could not bear the type of person who stirred up trouble, or allowed that my country had any faults, or went so far as to suggest an apology, even if we had made a bit of a mistake. I always said the great thing was not to take it lying down, to keep the wheels well oiled and, if you had a few extras, to share them, though everybody's first duty was to look after number one.

"If I were to begin describing the sort of time I put in, it might sound pretty uneventful, but I shouldn't

mind having it over again. The thought of growing old was my only bugbear, principally because it would interfere with sport, and I should not be able to keep up with the others as I used to. I don't think I have much more to say, as I did not care greatly for politics, except, of course, that I was on the gentlemanly side and, if I had to choose where to go, it would be to much the same old spot, which you'd find it hard to beat. Meanwhile, I am real sorry if my story lacks colour, but I never was clever, and thank God for it, though if you could manage to let me join some of my pals, I should be more than obliged, as I simply can't stand being alone."

When the advocate was called upon to plead for the Philistine he was much affected by his cheerfulness, and found some difficulty in investing the occasion with befitting solemnity. Yet as he proceeded no one who heard the case but must have wept over the waste to which it pointed.

"I rise, my Lord," he said, "to claim your indulgence on behalf of the accused, who has within him finer possibilities than he is aware of. I am conscious that the host of the Philistines is legion and that, if reduced to facts, they amount to hardly more than lizards in the sun. I would lay the blame largely on his up-bringing, and on the custom which prevails of allowing drones to exist in the human hive. I believe the prisoner to be ignorant of having offended in any one respect, and that, if it had appeared wrong to him, he would not have led such an apology for a life.

“The idea of leaving things undone which ought to have been done did not enter his world, for he was a member of that numerous class whose ethics are confined to the negative commandments, notably that of not being found out. It is true that even these he lightly disregarded, when they proved inconvenient, but from my knowledge of him I fail to see how he could have become serious or have remained so for long. Suffering as he did from good health, he was heavily handicapped, and I hold that for him to be ‘decently straight and invariably pleasant’ was a bigger achievement than he suggests. I could mention countless instances in which his care for animals afforded an example to the intensely religious which they might well lay to heart. In dealing with his fellows he may have confined himself to such colloquialisms as ‘poor old chap,’ but they were often accompanied by more practical proofs of charity than many a meaningless ‘God bless you.’ It is not easy for me to defend his attitude towards the world at large, but he began by tackling his local responsibilities with all the zeal of which he was capable, though he handed over the major part of them to those whom he could pay and who would see him through.

“When death threatened he was always to the fore, and I am moved to tears when I think of him trying to express himself at some dying bed or on the scene of some accident. I own, my Lord, that the Philistine was selfishness incarnate, and that, so long as he was fairly comfortable, an earthquake might take place elsewhere and his appetite would not be affected. But

my memory goes back to a time when I see him risking his life for his country and undergoing every conceivable hardship, while he swore like a trooper that the whole thing was a nuisance. It is these contrasts in the man which touch me, and I cannot but wonder what might have happened if he had broken his leg, or if he had become enamoured of a good woman. (I leave it for your Lordship to decide on the justice of such an arrangement for the lady.) I am all too conscious of the anti-climax presented by the case, but I beg you in sentencing the prisoner to pass a judgment which shall open a door of hope that his best qualities, up till now nullified by comfort, may be brought into being. I plead that none of the strength or charm or manners, or, best of all, the brave brightness, may be lost, but that, by some method known to yourself, they may effect their purpose."

After the speech of the advocate, the man in the Judge seemed to be struggling with the office, and it was fortunate for the accused that he had come before such an understanding power. If looks could translate thoughts, an open verdict was the most likely one, though philosophy pointed to a long education before there could be any satisfying result. The conversation preceding the judgment threw a considerable light on the sentiments both of questioner and questioned. The former, as was his wont, touched on many matters which might have been called irrelevant, but which plainly showed that nothing short of getting at the root of the business would content him.

“Would you kindly inform me whether, in your early youth, the inward meaning of things was brought before you, or whether religion, as you understood it, was observed in your home?”

“To the first query my answer is not at all, as things went very smoothly, and I can recall no trouble worth mentioning. As to the observance of religion, we carried it on somehow, on the principle of good form, but all emotion on the subject was absent and it was supposed to be managed by the parson, or included in the school fees.”

“Did your parents never appear sad, or did they never speak to you of prayer or details of that kind?”

“Heavens, no! I don’t fancy they saw too much of each other, as my father was generally out and my mother was extremely reserved, so she might have gone through a good deal without our knowing it.”

“And your education?”

“I went to the best school, all right, and had a ripping time, but of course I never got to the Sixth, or that sort of thing.”

“Did the masters show much interest in your development?”

“They would not have taken such liberties or been so familiar. They were good old sorts, though, and played up well when a fellow got into a hat. At all events, they brought us up never to tell a lie, and always to play with a straight bat.”

“Did you often get into what you call ‘hats’ at school?”

“Any amount, besides those which ought to have

been worn by some of the other boys, but then they were not particularly strong and would easily have gone under."

"What did you learn?"

"Well, we didn't exactly go there to learn, but when it came to the exams, we put on a spurt and now and then one did rather well at a pinch."

"Have you remembered anything?"

"I doubt if I have, but all I can say is I'm awfully grateful for the place, to which I owe a bigger debt than I could put on paper, and I should be glad if you would not say a word against what I look back to with tremendous respect. I was rather a coward just now not to own that the Head treated me with a tenderness I shall never forget, and that he has been my secret hero ever since."

"Were you deeply affected by the love affairs which came to you in due course, and might more than once have proved an awakening?"

"I can't say I was. I don't suppose either of us wanted much, and the girls I cared for were of the same sort as myself, while the others did not count."

"Did none of them leave any mark on your character?"

"I don't think they did. You see, we never took that sort of thing seriously. We cared much more for hunting, and we were not a bit sentimental, though, of course, flirting had its place in our amusements."

"And how did they get on afterwards?"

"Much the same, I fancy. They settled down all

right when they happened on a fellow with money, or, if they didn't, no one heard much about them."

"And when it came to marriage?"

"I took it in the natural course of things, though it was a bit trying to say good-bye to my bachelor friends, but they told me I should soon get over it."

"Did you love one another?"

"I should think that was too strong a term, but we were first-class pals, and both of us read the same style of books, which always ended in a capital show, with no end of bridesmaids and the whole thing awfully well done, so I suppose we knew it would have to come."

"As you grew older, what about the public duties to which you were called by your position?"

"The fact is I rather let them slide, as they soon became a bore; then I dropped them altogether, persuading myself that this side could best be managed by the officials."

"Did it strike you that your body was getting the upper hand, that there was something beyond, and that a time was coming when you would have to face the mystery which for you is just setting in?"

"Not in the least, really, but now I think of it, I did make rather a point of comfort as to baths and clothes and food, and I was awfully particular as to associating with anybody sort of halfway. As to death, I expected when it came along I should take my gruel all right and stand the shot, but otherwise I cannot say it weighed much with me."

"Were you never heartily ashamed as you looked at

the pictures of your ancestors and wondered whether you would be worthy of where they had come?"

"Hardly ever, though possibly I used to dream things like that in a comfortable sort of way, after two or three nightcaps, or when I was a trifle hipped, but I was all right next morning."

"And as for this country, this world of yours, this mass of men and women under the harrow in big cities, or the cruelty and lust you must have witnessed in your journeys abroad — did these things never cause your heart to ache?"

"I can't say they did. Don't you see if I had allowed what you call sympathy to come into my life, on a large scale, I should have had to become quite another sort of chap. All my arrangements would have been upset, and, worst of all, I should have been considered half a lunatic or a ranter, which is too dreadful to contemplate. Besides, to be candid, all this went like water off a duck's back, though, politically, I realised, now and again, that things were getting a little warm, but, so long as they lasted out my time, I couldn't see how it mattered."

The Judge looked almost hopeless, yet he regarded the accused with wistful affection, for he had had great possessions. "I wish, if I can, to point out to you what I know you entirely appreciate, in spite of anything you may say to the contrary. I willingly overlook the clothes, the baths, the dinners, the eternal round of self-pleasing, but your insensibility in regard to the universal pain angers me by its shallowness and its

hardness of heart. Who knows better than myself how richly endowed you were when you came into the world? Who understands better the responsibility of birth, tradition, and all that goes to make good breeding, with hardly any trouble on the part of the recipient? Who could hold in higher esteem the delightful absence of caste and class which distinguished you, and which is the hall-mark of the gentle? Who can better estimate the advantage of good health, and still more, of good spirits, which if rightly used might have acted like magic among the sick, the tired, the unfortunate, and the lonely?

"To my thinking you have missed immense opportunities, and the pity of it is that you could not see it, though, if you had, you would have been the first to volunteer for the forlorn hope which was calling out for your qualities. Man was never intended to be satisfied with a purely carnal life, however perfect the setting! It has to be borne in on you that strength is a loan, that easy circumstances may soon prove the ruin of a man's best, and that that brain of yours, which is not half so poor a one as you allege, was meant to tackle problems in the solving of which each citizen should take his share. The truth, in brief, which you must absorb, is that the object of your creation was not to bask, but to bless through that unused heart given you in order to warm the world.

"You will therefore leave this place judged by yourself and no one else, and though the vision will come to you sooner than to most, you must learn through tribulation what it is to love. Some day, when you have

come to care, it will grow clear to you that your kingdom consists of more than eating and drinking or satisfying your inclinations, with a certain amount of kindness thrown in. Otherwise you would become a fossil. You will then discover that the sin of having accomplished nothing may be worse than active evil commingled with good, and you will look back with contempt on a period of self-pleasing which cannot be condoned by mannerisms or fine phrases. You will understand by degrees that your talk of patriotism was vitiated by your indolence, and that devotion to your country carries with it a great deal more than willingness to share in a scrap. For this and sundry other exhibitions you have already been rewarded by medals and deified by sentimental women.

“You must go back to those high ideals implanted in you by your mother, whose aloneness was due to the same sort of character in your father as you have described in yourself. If you had only known it, she often prayed for you in her silence, and longed for you to develop into something worth while. True enough that the masters at your school seldom, if ever, in a place reserved for the so-called fortunate, touched on such themes, but when you know what it is to bend your back to honest work, and when you have discovered that nothing was ever accomplished without pains, you will envy the labourers who furnish an example of days spent in toil followed by well-earned repose. You need to get hold of the injury done to the young, which apparently has never entered into your mind. You can have

no conception of the boys or of the young men who were copying you throughout your career, a habit which obtains in proportion to lack of brains or of necessity. Your very tailor was a temptation, and your casualness repeated itself in hundreds who are now worshipping the same style and emulating the same ease afforded by your example. Doubtless your own failure was modelled on a similar type, but when the pattern is both wrong and attractive, no one can compute the misfits which follow. You are too generous not to be cut to the quick by such reflections, and you would be the first, if the opportunity offered, to correct such an error.

“You have no reason, in spite of a revelation which opens up to you a novel view of existence, to fall into the other extreme of despondency. You possess more than ordinarily good material, and I am sanguine that you will, to use your own expression, ‘take your gruel,’ nor rest until, in place of a materialist, you become even a spiritual force which, without a vestige of ‘ranting,’ shall help instead of hindering the ‘other fellows,’ to your common good. Go, then, and make your own arrangements, as befits your manliness, and act out those dreams in which you indulged when you were rather hipped, or tricked by alcohol into seeing visions of what you might become. The prayers of that misunderstood, taken-for-granted, and neglected mother shall be answered in the fulness of time, and with the ‘Head’ she will rejoice over her boy on his return from the far-off country. No one will do better work or take it out of himself more when he gets back to the old farm.”

CHAPTER VII

THE DAUGHTER OF JOY

SHE looked dog tired and glad to have found at last any sort of place where there was peace, though it was one of punishment. The only thing she appeared to want was to be done with it all and to get it over, being best described as a bird which had spoilt its plumage by beating against the bars and now lay exhausted at the bottom of the cage. Her face, badly marred, had once been beautiful, and her previous charm was apparent as she impulsively stood up and jerked out her words with nervous hesitation combined with a half defiance, betokening the final struggle before she yielded. The tricks of her trade revealed themselves in the smallest action, telling of a type which, from Aspasia to the street-walker, has a cachet common to all.

Her origin had always been more or less of a mystery, and so accustomed had she become to romancing about it, to suit the occasion, that any trustworthy evidence had long been lost in a mist of lies. By turns she had been the daughter of a clergyman, of an honest farmer, or of a peer conspicuous for gallantry, and more than once she had scored by claiming the protection granted to an innocent but illegitimate girl. Probably the truth

was that she belonged to a large class which combines a certain amount of money with still more vulgarity, but there was a streak of refinement in her of which she was conscious, due to previous irregularities. On this point she was not pressed by the Judge, who made it a rule to admit no reference to the detriment of an absentee, having no use for the third party. Her attitude was that of a woman for whom nothing mattered, being less pugnacious than beaten, and it was difficult, having once seen it, to forget the melancholy and glazed look in her eyes. It was a relief to find herself alone, where there were no chivying, no bestial language, and none of that confusion to which she had of late been accustomed.

Yet the very silence was a torture to her, as though she loathed the solitude for which she craved, and anything more pitiable than the moral wreck she presented it would be hard to imagine. The word desolation conveyed the most vivid picture of her expression, the soul having fled away, without the solace of annihilation. Never was there such a satire on her name. Any halo there might have been had long disappeared, and the process which must have led up to such a climax became disgusting and repulsive. What the blurting out of the unvarnished truth meant to the Daughter of Joy only she could tell, but the working of her features plainly showed the effect of this interview with herself. Doggedness and obstinacy were conspicuous. She displayed the unfeeling tyranny which had encrusted her heart through trading on human weakness and taking a brutal

advantage of situations. Gradually a comparative softness, which brought hope of tears, set in as she looked at the Judge, though as yet not a word had been spoken.

"I should like," she said, in her restless way, as one who is always in a hurry because she has nothing definite to do, "to say that I have no excuse, and that the blame belongs to no one else. I was never drugged or decoyed, and then found myself unable to get back, or any fairy tales of that kind. From the beginning I realised what I was doing and deliberately chose the vilest, cruellest, and most selfish life under the sun. Naturally, at the start, I merely pleased myself, without stopping to consider the wickedness involved, which, when I was old enough to understand it, had not the least effect on me. From the time I knew anything, my instinct was to get as much feeling and zest into my days as possible. I can justify myself on no plea except that home was dull, goodness still duller, and work most repellent of all. By keeping my eyes open, it came to me that any girl, if she pleased, might ruin men and live upon them, provided the bird of prey was sufficiently attractive. I watched thousands of others who avoided all restraint and who seemed, at any rate, to be having a rosy time, which was all I cared about. Before I was out of my teens this idea got hold of me, and my motto was self first, and the devil take the hindermost. He has taken them, too.

"I can see now that I broke my mother's heart, brought shame on all belonging to me, and began my career by laughing in the face of God. The books which

say that this happens through a girl being betrayed and then taking her revenge may be partially correct but are much overdrawn, and in my case it was not the true story. It may be so in countless instances, but my firm conviction is that the person who wrote the story of the Garden of Eden was not far out. Certainly, for the most part, women do the tempting, at least in man's first downfall, though, thank Heaven, this applies to the Eves and not to the Maries of the world. It doesn't always hold good, though, for there are lots of men who are women, and women who are men, which may sound strange, but they got into the wrong bodies. The taint was in my blood, nor did I pause to think whether it was impure or otherwise. That side never struck me; I was out for my own pleasure, which, to an extent, I got — at the price of some one else's pain. Conceit, vanity, and sloth had been my chief make-up so long as I could remember.

"I cannot recall taking up anything seriously, except with a view to producing an effect on the rest of the family, but I was an actress from the time I began to talk. I detested effort, especially any form of education, and, if conscience stirred in its sleep, I silenced it with bad company, worse plays, and still more degraded literature, though as yet I had not crossed the borderline. One thing stands out, namely, that I never could abide staying at home or being by myself, and long before I had lost my innocence, I was mentally a prey to movement, fine clothes, and excitement. When I was at school, I used to get the other girls under my thumb and deceive the mistress by pretending to depths

which none but she could sound. When I flirted with boys, I was never touched, but I liked to make them miss me and send me messages which I might bring up against them.

“After the first step, I set myself, by every art I possessed, to drag men down, and found a special fillip in the case of the good though erotic, making them fancy that love could be bought and that my endearments were genuine. They proved a simple affair, the temptation to them being tenfold stronger than to the abandoned woman, and what for them constituted a terrific brain storm was for me a matter of routine. There were hundreds who began by sincerely desiring to save me, and whom I deliberately seduced in their attempt, which brings up some of my most painful memories, but I am bound to add that the nicest men are awfully weak towards our class, being kind to us out of all proportion. It is this weakness which is our chief stock in trade. In reality, save in these cases, I was unmoved, nor did I care a fig so long as I provoked passions and secured my reward. How I could have done what I did fairly puzzles me, but it is impossible here to deny facts, or to pretend that I was not one of the worst enemies of mankind.

“I spoiled the legitimate happiness of good women whom at the same moment I hated and envied, lowering my sex in their eyes until they were ashamed of belonging to it. The thought of my mother, especially after her death, stung me into a remorse that drove me well-nigh mad. I was haunted by the faces of young

men, hardly more than boys, who, through my devilish treachery, had forfeited their honour and their health so that they could not look into the eyes of their sisters, or of their intended brides. This sounds too horrible, even for a confession, but the game goes on, and thousands upon thousands of men, as well as women, are being ruined every night, to the tune of the gayest music and the scent of the sweetest flowers.

“Well do I remember the jewels heaped upon me by these worse than fools so long as my beauty lasted, though, as it waned, I fell lower and lower. Yet my instincts remained the same, and were even intensified, namely, to secure the maximum of sensation with the minimum of effort, at the expense of any one who was willing to foot the bill. When I had lost my looks and was hungry I learned the cruel side of men, for they treated me as dirt, or recommended the workhouse, because I could no longer please. As to physical fear, it had ceased to affect me, since I had got to look on life much as a hardened gambler does on the tables, where all have equal chances, where the risks add to the charm, and where the bank is bound to win in the long run. Anything aboveboard or lawful became insipid, and I accuse myself of having done my best to help forward the kingdom of evil and prevent that of good.

“In one respect, at all events, I got full payment: I lost the power of loving, forfeited the joy of giving one honest kiss, though I received many, and banished forever the vision of home and motherhood. I stand

here, ruined, degraded, and the wretchedest of women, had I not become so numbed that I hardly feel at all. The sense of shame is setting in, and with it the taste of a hell to which I would not consign my worst enemy. I only ask to be dealt with quickly so that I may live again in working out the punishment I crave for, which I have brought upon myself."

The prisoner's advocate was deeply moved, and with unconcealed emotion addressed the Judge. He felt the far-reaching character of the tale that had been told, and the truth that, as woman can rise to higher heights, she can fall to lower depths than man. The awful fact of the liberty of free will was forcibly brought home to him. In this special connection he understood how powerless was any appeal in face of the cruelty of prostitution practised on business principles and in defiance of conscience. Yet he held his head high, like a man engaged in a crusade on behalf of weakness, and of a type regarding whom, being a person of refinement, he found it difficult to decide whether it had most sinned or been sinned against in the transaction. He did not disguise from himself the gravity of the sex question, or that he was getting into close grips with undoubtedly the strongest of the forces, which, at a certain period, move humanity.

"In spite of the prisoner's confession, and of the untold harm which I cannot conceal from myself that she has done, I rise, my Lord, to claim your pity. It will not surprise you to hear that there is another side which she has either forgotten or taken for granted, but which,

none the less, qualifies her degradation. I can tell you of acts of kindness, and even tenderness, on the part of the accused rarely found among the virtuous. Times without number I have witnessed the sharing of her last meal with a still poorer sister, and I can think of her sitting up ten nights without intermission with a dying man whom all neglected and who was an entire stranger to her. A rich man with whom she lived offered her marriage three times, but she refused because she would not spoil his chances and because she said it was not cricket. Some redeeming features there must have been when he implored her to be his wife, though twice, in a fit of drunkenness, she had nearly brought about his death, and more than once had treated him with every indignity.

“Again, my Lord, I can see her risking her life, during an epidemic, and nursing children so covered with confluent smallpox that ninety-nine out of a hundred would have fled, and kissing them, too, with an abandonment well-nigh divine. I have heard her offer to defend her mother’s name with her life, if it was disparaged in the smallest particular. I could recount how, again and again, the prisoner, in fits of reaction, haunted churches, knelt before altars, made resolves, and was on the verge of becoming penitent, but the seven devils took possession of her once more and she became as desperate as ever. It is not for me to suggest how different her story might have been if her instincts had been earlier combated, and if, in her youth, she had known honourable love.

“Your Lordship is aware how poor a brief I hold, but, though I cannot prove it, I still assert that the heart of this woman had particles of good and that she was capable of exceptional heroism in any work of rescue. Nothing can help her short of a great trust born of a great charity, which, through the darkest night, can discern the coming of a brighter day for her and her sorrowful sisterhood. Such a sympathy is impossible to any save yourself, for it demands a holiness of which few are capable, and which, in itself, among ordinary men, precludes the experience requisite to measure the difficulties of the prisoner. I can at least urge that she has given no hint that she was virtually driven from home, where she might have had every comfort, but where she felt she was not wanted, which was the prime cause of the debacle that followed. Then it was that the demon entered into her and, tortured by a treadmill to her unendurable, she became a temptress and a pest to society, sooner than find no vent for an individuality which would not be denied. The grief she has endured, which she accepts without a murmur, pleads for her more eloquently than any words of mine.

“In view of the consummate folly of her choice, and her persistent refusal of appeal after appeal to her own interests, I can only regard her as morally insane, and ask you to treat her as one bereft of reason. That she was bad as well as mad, and that she became cruel as the grave, no one can gainsay, but I entreat your pity for her because I am more conscious even than she of her dualism, and that, if this torrent of recklessness could be diverted,

it might be used as power to light those who sit in darkness and in a similar shadow of death. More I cannot add, lest I should appear to palliate this worst of wrongs, or by a single syllable furnish an excuse for such a career. I am confident that, taking into account the handicap afforded by her distorted nature, in the sentence to be pronounced mercy and truth will meet together."

The Judge was troubled beyond measure and, as was his custom, conversed with the prisoner for a while before arriving at his decision, treating her as he would have done any other lady. When he asked her the cause of her leaving home, she still refused to say one word against her mother, but maintained that it was just a whim of her own, because she wanted to see the world and drain the cup of life to the dregs.

When the Judge enquired if she considered her trade a necessity, quoting the opinion of several writers of repute that it was the oldest in the world and could not be stamped out, she answered that she had never studied the subject. In her own case and, she believed, in that of every woman in her country, whatever the conscience elsewhere, each wilfully violated what she knew to be the highest law of her being, nor did she wish to escape by the back door of such a pretext.

On his referring to the economic conditions which were by many held responsible, seeing that fear of starvation is calculated to drive its victim to any lengths, the Daughter of Joy owned that in many instances it might be so, and that it was a crying shame. She herself would rather have starved than have yielded, save for

an inborn tendency to evil and to adventure, which she could not attribute to necessity.

To the suggestion made, with singular respect, by the Judge, that, having once gone under, she was irretrievably ruined, the prisoner retorted that again and again she might have pulled up if she had wished, that hundreds of hands were outstretched to save her, and that harbours of refuge abounded on every side. She went so far as to say that, after the worst collapses, she had heard most clearly the voices of the angels and had caught the rustle of their wings.

The Judge desired to know how she reconciled her fiendish cruelty towards men, more especially to the young, with her care for the sick, her sympathy with the starving, and her recklessness in risking her life, to which her only reply was that she took a devilish pleasure in the former, while (illogically) she supposed that no woman could have done other than she did in the latter case, and that there was nothing in it.

When, lastly, he asked the prisoner if she ever regretted the loss of her innocence, the miss of a child, the pleasure of a garden, the sparkle of the sea, or the shining of the stars, she broke down. Over her face came a look from the past which showed that she loved all these things in common with the best and that, through the recalling of them, a faint desire was born to return and be good.

The Judge summed up in terms which betrayed his commiseration:

“Neither do I condemn you,” he said, “seeing that

no one who has ever been a man can cast a stone. You need no reminding how much you have suffered or how much you have lost. I respect you, also, for not posing as a martyr, while your silence concerning others points to the regaining of qualities you have done your best to destroy. The misery caused by the desecration of your womanhood must ever remain and, tenderly as my heart goes out to your need, no sentence of mine can absolve you from that process of cleansing for which, despite your protestations, I know that you yearn. To have used outpourings of love, written in good faith, to the stabbing of another, is an act which the best, even in your profession, would utterly despise. Sudden, sustained goodness after such sinning can never be, however much pity may be inclined to point out an easier way. It might be alleged that you have already had your hell and have paid the penalty for the injury you have done, but the evil lies deeper, and this Court is not concerned with rewards or punishments, as is often misstated by those who claim to know its secrets.

“You never can and never will be happy until you have regained your sex, but, to this end, you must learn that your brain and your soul are vastly more important than your flesh. This is the root of the error which has ruined your character, apart from the special department of evil in which you have been employed. According to your own confession, you have consistently avoided the slightest suspicion of work, therefore you will be taught its true value and — for you a harder task — you will be compelled to think. It will prove a

severer struggle than the nursing, the sharing, and the risk, which are but the better side of passion itself. The labour that lies before you is your development into an intelligent being; it will follow that you become a self-respecting one. You will hate it beyond imagining; your old emotions, not yet under complete control, will drive you to rebel against restraint, and the path of penance will seem too narrow for your wayward feet. Sights and sounds of former days will return to you in your dreams. You will crave for the God you have insulted, and thirst for the vision of chastity as for water in the desert.

“I could not, if I wished, save you from the hauntings of memory, but, in proportion as you persevere, they will fade away and your indeterminate sentence be shortened. You will remain in a prison of my selection until you have been purified, and have fitted yourself to atone not so much for your vileness as for your lack of love. No consolation on my part can lessen the agony of at last knowing yourself in your true colours, but even this shall have an end, and the scarlet shall become white as snow. Of one thing be certain, that the best in you, however hidden, shall emerge, and that the flashes of good which illuminated the blackness of your sky shall become a permanent glow.

“Therefore, be comforted and leave this Court for your retreat, confident, as I am, that those seven devils shall be duly exorcised. To rule and to dare is too much part of your identity to disappear, and you shall become the slave of a new unrest to save the tempted

at the risk of a character now restored. You shall use your wiles to catch others by guile, but no longer for your own delectation, and you shall dominate, not by fascination, but by humility. Your changed atmosphere shall declare that the wisdom from above is first pure, and if asked your reason, your face shall be sufficient argument. When you see, as you shall, the cup of so-called life being drained to the dregs, your mere look will cause many to hesitate, though by others you shall be hooted for the thing you were. The value of your recklessness shall be shown, and you shall mind nothing so long as the stolen evidence of passionate but genuine devotion may be burnt in a fire of your own kindling. Courage, my child, and when your hour is come, seven angels shall take the place of those seven devils and waft you to the abode of Perfect Love, where your transformed passions shall be expressed, not in sin, but in submission. The Daughter of Joy shall yet sing as in the days of her youth, and shall be known as one who lives not to blight but to bestow it."

CHAPTER VIII

THE AGITATOR

HIS appearance was the reverse of prepossessing, but he aroused a keen interest in view of the vastness of the mischief for which he stood, as also of the wrong he would have claimed it was his rôle to rectify. The most striking features about the Agitator were his conceit and his masterfulness, which were not surprising as he could never have attained his position without them. The absence of the pathos which might have been looked for and his gaiety under the circumstances created unalloyed disgust. He was moved more by pride than by pity, and in this separator of friends was a faint picture of the force which works for the division of mankind. The worst of it was there was so much to go on, but none the less did his trade, for it was a trade, appear abhorrent while he sat there as though the world belonged to him, and he had but to say the word to affect the destinies of thousands.

That he could be put on his trial at all was for him an absurdity, and the curl of his lip told of unmitigated scorn. Gradually he became influenced by his surroundings, and began to show a hesitation and an uncertainty in himself which were the prelude to novel

concessions. His undeniable fearlessness called forth something akin to admiration as he began his confession with the air of one who meant to have it out fair and square, Judge or no Judge, so long as he might express his overweening impudence.

“Had I been consulted,” he said, “I should not have come here, for it is my rule never to climb down, lest I should cease to gain the confidence of the crowds who hang on my lips. There is, however, something about this place that threatens to bring me off my perch, which would be impossible if any one else were present. My contention is that I have tried to do my duty by those whose cause I represented, and to undo some of the evils arising from inequalities and thraldoms which are a curse among human beings, and which I cannot believe you yourself approve. Originally I was a worker and suffered with the rest, though the iron had already entered into my soul. When I was a kid I had seen my mother go without bread, and the little ones at home fall sick, without any comfort or extra nourishment. A great hatred took possession of me, and I made a vow that, should I live to become a man, it would not be my fault if I did not have my revenge.

“Having more than my share of brains, I studied hard in my leisure moments, practised speaking on every possible occasion, and took a delight in listening to the orators who came among us and inflamed us with their words. I learned my trade so as to be able to talk from my book, and never lost sight of my object, nor was it long before I laid down my tools to become

a leader of my fellows against their oppressors. Not that I was lazy or that, in the early stages, I was affected by money, but as my sphere grew larger, I suppose I was lured by the very thing I was combating, and talked so much and so often of having been a working-man that I forgot I had ceased to be one. The whole affair became a business to me, and I defy any one to be able to move the masses without being more or less drunk with domination, the only liquor strong enough for those who have once tasted it. In my rough way I believed in God, but He was more political than paternal, and so insistent was I on the word Justice that it eclipsed the word Love. I quoted the Gospel galore, or rather those bits that suited me, for my education had been a prejudiced one, and I should have been a failure had I owned to the reverse of the shield. The fact is that party spirit was as strong with us as in Parliament, and a leader who was honest enough to argue all round would have found himself between two stools, and have been distrusted by both sides.

“This was not my game. After having for years advocated the cause of the poor and of the worker, I ceased to believe such a thing existed as that of the wealthy, or that there was any possible plea for leisure. I own with regret that the influence of this attitude on myself was to the bad, and that I ended a much less kind man, for, though I was death on drink and worshipped virtue, strange to say I was nearer Heaven when I was more natural. I began to loathe the mention of peace and, if the chances of a strike were in the air,

my colleagues (I had given up using the word mates) and I met together to devise how we might stir up strife, so that there should be more wigs on the green, and lest we should lose our pay.

“As for my country, it might go to hell unless possessed by the working classes, for I was too much soaked with every story bearing on revolution to care a curse so long as the red flag was triumphant. I associated only with those who had a grievance, till it became a positive pleasure to fan it into a flame, though who should put out the fire, or what damage might ensue, never occurred to me. Governments didn’t count, kings didn’t count, women didn’t count, children didn’t count if only I loomed large in the canvas, and I remember how I gloated over the speeches made at gigantic assemblies, but I read only my own.

“There is my story and I am angry still, but my wrath was less personal than professional, or rather it was so confused with my own advancement that it is difficult to decide whether it was real or fictitious. A vein of bluntness in me, apart from compulsion, prompts me to speak out and, struck by the kindness of your face, I am bold to believe that you will not condemn me wholesale. Wherein I know that I have erred is that my motives were not unmixed, but, whatever the suffering involved, I cannot take back a word in regard to the horrors to which I have referred. If you would help me back to the sanity of my boyhood, and if the example of my punishment would restrain those who follow me from forsaking their early inspiration to do battle,

within legal limits, for their hearths and homes, any price which I might have to pay would be cheap. I should even esteem it a clear gain and should not utter a single complaint."

The advocate, who was more or less inspired by the Agitator's tone, displayed no feelings of abhorrence, but, on the other hand, not a vestige of sentimentality. "I cannot conceal from myself," he said, "the untold harm of which the accused appears to be guilty, but I use the term *appears*, seeing that the fault is mainly due to an upheaval over which he had less control than he imagined, and which is by no means the worst feature in the world's evolution. No one will be readier than your Lordship to concede that the chronic pain existing among the many through the iniquitous selfishness of the few calls for channels whereby the crowd may express its collective opinion and demand common justice. This man was one of such spokesmen, and I speak with more intimate knowledge of him than many of my brother advocates have had of prisoners who were better placed.

"He saw, and with good reason, that the salvation of the poor rested chiefly with themselves, and that, if they were united for a single end, they could do much to bring about, not a millennium, but at least a division of goods more becoming amongst the children of a common Father. Like many others, he became angered that a huge proportion of the race should labour in sweat and grime for a minority who lived in luxury and revelled in self-pleasing from one year's end to another. Your Lordship will therefore discount the prisoner's lack of

logic in that he failed to perceive that work brings its peculiar reward, and self-indulgence its own scourge. It is not to be wondered at that he saw only the outside, and could not grasp the fact that poverty with contentment is great gain. When I said that I knew him well, I meant that I have often met with him at his Chapel, and at times when he was so distressed by the issues at stake that he became for me more lovable than many a holier man who had never done a round turn for the oppressed. This man was no debauchee, having his passions under strong control, nor did he do this, as he alleged, only to keep his place, but there was a fund of religion in him and his mother went far to keep him pure. This was how he began, and then, in his very effort to keep his nature under restraint, he became impervious to the groaning and travailing which is the lot of all creation, and which continues up till now. To him it appeared otherwise; this groaning and travailing was sectional and, seeing it mainly in his mother and the 'kids' (his father had been fatally injured in an accident when drunk), he lost all sense of proportion and ran the risk of becoming a brute.

"You will, I am certain, make allowances for the consequent deterioration which was fostered by the lurid creed of his childhood, with plenty of flames and sulphur thrown in, to which the local preacher relegated those who fed on the fat of the land. This man, my Lord, would have been altogether different if he had had a sweetheart, but he denied himself in order to see his mother through and to bring up the rest of the family. I hold that, granted such an intention, he deserves ample

consideration, and that the same dangerous fanaticism will always exist so long as those who have been nurtured in the gentler ways of the Gospel keep themselves to themselves and meet fine enthusiasm with ill-disguised contempt. The prisoner became an agitator only by degrees, nor would he have deserved the title in the earlier chapters of the book. Later his very face altered and, when the temptation of power assailed his ignorance, he degenerated beyond recognition. His mother's death put the seal to his undoing, until her son, who started as the saviour of his house, ended as what I frankly own might be called the enemy of his country. There came a stage when he was irresponsible, an instrument in the hands of evil, though he had begun by earnest prayer that he might bring a blessing. As for his judgment, I leave it to your Lordship, being unable even to guess at its direction. I plead for the real man beneath its disfigurement, thankful that at the last each has to do with a mercy which is not only sound, but which has for its aim the re-instatement of every human being."

The Judge's attention had not wavered during the advocate's speech, and, if it were possible to charge him with variation of interest in the cases, that of the Agitator would not have ranked lowest in the scale. You felt instinctively that he was on the side of the majority, nor could you help calling to mind the story of One Who was born in a stable, of a mother who could afford no proofs of her marriage. He regarded the prisoner with great sorrow, but with deep respect, for there was an absence of trifling or indecision about him that

made the case worth while. His preliminary questions were marked by extreme delicacy and forbearance with one who, try as he might, could only see men as trees walking, and even they were limited to a single kind.

“Tell me,” he began, “about your father. Did he suffer much after the accident, or did he pass without any great pain?”

The Agitator was taken aback, and suddenly seemed to be once more in the miner’s cottage. “Yes, he lingered a bit,” he answered, in a choked voice, “long enough, thank God, to return to the kind of man he was before he took to the drink, and to trust in the Old Story, but how could you think of such a question?”

“What was the Old Story your father reverted to?”

“The kindness of the Saviour who died for all and was Himself a Socialist.”

“I think we will stop at the first part of the sentence, which is more than enough and makes all equally precious.”

(Reluctantly) “I suppose it does.”

“Where did you pick up your education? — on which I congratulate you, since knowledge is always valuable and it is fine to accomplish good work with poor tools.”

“First in the Night School, then at the Public Libraries, where I could select the books I wanted, as there was no great run on them.”

“Would you say that these libraries were entirely to the good?”

“Not as you put it, with that tone in your voice, but at the time I thought so.”

“It seems a pity that you did not read some of the other books, of which there were plenty.”

“You don’t mean novels, do you?”

“No, I don’t mean only novels, though many of them would have done you good. Were most of your fellow workmen happy?”

“Quite a number, but then they were not ambitious chaps and they seemed content with the village.”

“Should you say they were wrong?”

“Not so wrong from my present standpoint as I should have said then.”

“Were they a religious type?”

“Nearly all without exception, which made them too soft for my thinking and too prone to accept things as they were.”

“I can more than understand your feelings in this respect. Were you a happier man when working or when speaking?”

“I should say infinitely more when at my job, and I wish to God I could go back to it.”

“Had you any personal animus against the classes which helped to make you the firebrand you became?”

“I cannot say that I had, but I had read about their victimising the people, ruining their daughters, and living on sweated labour, out of which they got carriages, motor cars, yachts, and every other abomination.”

“Why abomination, and why abuse the results of human invention?”

“Well, it was the use they put them to, which was for themselves and for no one else on God’s earth.”

"That is better, and therein you appear to have reason for complaint. Were none of them ever kind to you?"

"Yes, several, and more would have been if I had allowed it; but when you came to know them as individuals you changed your opinions, so I kept apart and persuaded myself that they were only buying me for their own purposes."

"Did you never think that they also might suffer?"

"I cannot say I thought of them at all."

"That is just where you were wrong. How would you have liked to have nothing to do, to wonder how you could put in the time, to be dragged about at the whim of some selfish, over-dressed, lazy woman, to spoil your digestion by over-eating and over-drinking, to be eternally employed in the labour of pleasure till you were nauseated, and would have given your whole soul for a pick and shovel?"

"God forbid!"

"How would you like to have been so immersed in stocks and shares that a garden became meaningless and the grandest view a boredom compared to a scrip or the jingle of a coin?"

"God forbid!"

"How would you like to have had so many diseases that all the faculty were called in when there was nothing the matter with you, and when you died, how would you like your relations to swoop down like birds of prey for what you might leave behind?"

"God forbid!"

The only remark the Judge made was, "Just so."

“Did you happen,” he continued, “to study the laws of capital and labour, or to realise how mutually inter-dependent they were?”

“I knew the Socialist side well, but cannot say I was well up in the other.”

“Did you not think it hideously wicked to pour oil on the flames of human anger, to increase covetousness, and to breed dissension between those who were meant to be brethren?”

“The fault lay with the rich and with the capitalists.”

“I was not talking of the rich or of the capitalists. Rest assured that they will have to settle their own bill, but you forget my question.”

“I’ll own I knew it was wicked, but after sufficient repetition it became a habit, until I forgot the blue of the sky and saw only red.”

“I think I can understand, but I am deeply grieved.”

“Why should you be grieved for a man like me?”

“Because I love you, that’s all.”

“Good God!”

“Excellent words which I advise you to cherish, but the full meaning of which it will take you some time to learn. One other question. How far did love of country come in, or how far did you become willing to sell it to the foreigner, provided you could lower your special enemies in the dust, who, by the by, spoke your own language and were part and parcel of the same nation?”

“Yes, I got as low as that, but I daresay if there

had been trouble, blood would have proved thicker than water."

"What would you do now if you had the same chances?"

"I don't want them, and if they came to me I know that I should queer the pitch again, for the good reason that in no other way could I come to the top."

The lines on the Judge's face were more deeply marked at the end of his words than at the beginning, and he quickly pronounced his sentence, with a seriousness befitting the struggle through which the Agitator had evidently passed.

"I wish to thank you for the courtesy with which you have replied to my questions, nor do I disguise from myself that we have much in common. On the other hand, I would make it clear to you, though it may now be hardly necessary, that often enough the man who sets out with the intention of doing most good ends by doing most harm. The memory of the martyrdom which you have imposed on others, without bearing it yourself, will prove to you a worse hell than that which was so fluidly preached in your local Bethels. You will have to carry with you for years the thought of children done to death that you might taste the zest of living. So intense was your egoism that you thought to effect in your own person work belonging to a higher power, and even then dependent on the acceptance of its influence. You forgot that there is a larger proportion of happiness among the masses than among the classes, and that the kingdom of heaven is to be found in simplicity. Little

did you seem to grasp the fact that under silks and satins there is often an aching heart. Such a slave had you become to your own gospel that you overlooked the chief good, namely, work honestly done, accompanied by personal diffidence and universal sympathy.

“Ambition in itself is laudable, but in yours I discover neither religion nor patriotism, save in the beginning. If your mother had lived, she would hardly have known her boy and, had you been able to provide her with a carriage, you would have ruined that patient soul. What you did for your family is praiseworthy and your virtue has had its due reward. It is not for me to enter into economics, with which I have little to do, but it *is* for me, though it may wound you to the quick, to repeat that men like yourself are bound to arrive at the time when they recognise their folly. Perhaps the hardest thing I can say is that your country needs precisely such men as you if it is to be saved. Had you only remained gentle, loving, and, above all, large-hearted, instead of being obsessed by your own point of view, to the exclusion of every other interest, you might have left behind you an undying name as liberator, peace-maker, and, possibly, martyr.

“Your punishment, as you can imagine, is merely to take up your tools, to do your duty, to go back to those libraries and read those other books, and to undo by your example the effects of that hell-fire and political religion which obtained in your locality. When you have mastered your lesson, you shall be enabled to advocate the cause of justice without sinning against com-

mon sense and without losing one atom of your native fire. The day shall come when it is by no means unlikely that you will see red, but it will be the colour of your own blood. Your world will be a wider one, and it shall consist of rich and poor, one with another.”

CHAPTER IX

THE ACTOR

THE prisoner, for whom the word was of course only a courtesy title, glanced about him with a vague expression of surprise and disappointment, as though there had been a mistake in the seats allotted to him and to the Judge. He missed his audience badly, nor was he consoled by the prospect of being analysed. For a considerable time he was so dazed that he could not take in the absence of the theatrical, and his aloneness amounted to a tragedy. His artistic sense, however, came to the rescue. In spite of himself he looked forward to a drama without scenery. After the glare of the footlights the whiteness of his face, without his make-up, was ghastly. To appear without his company was disconcerting, and he shrank, as few, from this final judgment which was opposed to the histrionic. Yet, with courage bordering on effrontery, the Actor rose to the occasion and with feigned, if not natural humility, took his place to play the most earnest part for which he had been cast.

It was impossible to criticise him as other men, seeing that his whole career had been dramatic, and it would have been asking too much that he should altogether

divest himself of the spurious. The absorbing question was how far the man had become merged in the profession, though it is the fashion to assert that the two may exist entirely apart. No one would deny that such a crisis must have been far harder for him than for the ordinary prisoner. Such confusion may possibly be exaggerated by the onlooker who has not been admitted to private intimacy with the great, but the Actor bore traces of a long connection with the stage, which had gradually encroached on his day and entered into his being. It was this which called for special consideration, the more so since the almost inevitable loss of genuineness had been the gain of others. Once more the cosmic law became apparent, that no man lives to himself, or even affords amusement save at the risk of his own undoing. So swift was the accused to harmonise with the *mise-en-scène*, that he adopted the quick change to a private individual with hardly an effort. As the case proceeded and he found that it was confined mainly to his public attitude, he felt more at home, and reverted to the language of the theatre rather than to his mother tongue, which he had almost forgotten.

“I rise,” he said, “with all diffidence, to accuse myself of many things, perceiving that I am in the presence of my master, a sensation to which for some years I have been a stranger. Were I asked whether I am genuinely sorry, I should answer that part of me is, recognising as I do that this is the moment to shed a tear. But, being forced to honesty in spite of myself, I desire to express my inmost feelings so far as any remain. I wish

to acknowledge a self-satisfaction which, under present circumstances, ranks with insanity, and, what is still more fatal, is not in the picture. Indeed I realise that not only did I overrate myself but was seldom off the boards except in my sleep, when, by the bye, my dreams were naturally about my Mistress, to whom I am ever faithful. Here I might possibly recite one of my odes to art, a mere trifle, but on second thoughts I will cut it out. To be serious, I became a poseur of the worst description and, though I was too busy to detect its approach, there crept over me a blindness to facts and a lack of proportion for which I should have given it as my opinion that any one else ought to be 'certified.'

"I would further confess that this same clouding of my sense rendered it difficult to be a true friend, to answer letters, to keep engagements, or to hold by honour in my private relationships, unless they suited my whims or served the purpose of a poster. By nature I was not devoid of affection, being abnormally developed in that direction, which increases my offence, seeing that by a turn of the finger I could make any one my slave without giving them aught in return. It is surprising how I survived what to most men would have been tragedies, and would turn up for rehearsal without a cloud on my horizon. At this point I would like to remark that mesmerism as a science is much neglected, and no good work can be done without it. But where are we? Thus I became the willing victim of praise, and unless I received it, whether deserved or not, I grew tired and found myself bored even by my oldest acquaintances.

“My solace was the looking-glass, and to it I constantly resorted, till a moment came when it could no longer satisfy me and I was plunged into corresponding despair. Then I sent for my friends, whom I found as attached as ever, but the sense of my fascination for them (a talent which in some instances may amount to a misfortune), though it acted as a cocktail, failed to do me any lasting good. On the contrary, it intensified my conceit to think that there were quite a good many who would have been only too pleased to lay down their lives for me if I waved my wand, without any effort on my part to retain their devotion. What it was that attracted them I cannot say, but even now, in this uncomfortably solemn place, I am chuckling inside over a problem of which I was the centre.

“As for the Art to which my life was dedicated, I here admit, and with less confusion, since in the main I was true to it, that the temptations of my surroundings proved at times too strong for me. I have no desire to excuse myself at the expense of others, but having ever been careful to avoid scandal, I realise that I have not been severely tested. I prefer to own that the strain of remaining at my best and the price of preserving my early ideals became too expensive, particularly if it meant the loss of popularity and conflicted with the love of money, or rather spending power, which had grown upon me. With those about me, who possibly helped towards this end, it may not have been a sin, but for myself who had had the vision, these betrayals filled me with infinite sorrow. I knew full well

that I was born with a mission to inspire my fellows, and to turn this beastly wilderness of a world into some sort of garden. From the fulfilment of that high calling I frequently fell and, having fallen, would now ask a sentence which, however hard, shall help me to recover loyalty to the voices which I heard more clearly when I was a boy.

“I confess, above all, that I deliberately refused to teach the lessons laid upon me because, in my heart of hearts, I privately hated, while as an artist I adored, the principle of sacrifice. I had no intention of losing my life, though I often found it convenient to play the part in order to appeal to the emotions of the pit and to soothe the conscience of the stalls. I stand here to-day abashed, but happier than I can recall; and if I might beg one favour, it would be that the mischief I did may not be perpetuated, and that the Art which has been for me, and still is to multitudes their chief inspiration, may not have suffered irretrievably at my hands.”

The advocate rose with sternness but with confidence, conscious that he had to defend an exceptional character, but one who was more fool than knave, and without vice though he hugged his vices. He felt that he was engaged in a case of the first importance, more on account of the prevailing infatuation for the sham than on that of the accused. He had so often tried to get an interview with him, but had been put off to a more convenient season, or they had been interrupted, or else after two minutes the Actor had got back to himself,

that his counsel had nearly lost interest in his charge. The presence of the Judge not only revived it, but rendered the occasion far more suggestive.

He could not disguise from himself that what was taboo to hundreds of the most pious was to thousands not only one of their chief pleasures, but a strong factor in their mental development. It was not for him to weigh the pros and cons, but he was distressed at the chasm which divided the disputants, and was at pains to discover a *media via* by which they might at any rate become less opposed. It was apparent that without some dramatic talent the pulpit would be powerless, and that, if the actor should be a preacher, the preacher must also be an actor. What he longed to witness was not so much the abolition of the theatrical instinct as its purging from the flagrant abuses and hateful bias towards fantasy by which it was threatened. On the other hand, seeing that the difference between plays might be as great as between light and darkness, he feared a too hasty and sweeping condemnation. As the advocate, discarding personalities, surveyed this debatable ground of right and wrong, typified by the debonair figure leaning over the dock, he spoke with a pathos proportionate to its absence in the Actor.

"I rise, my Lord," he said, "to put before you the intimate side of the accused, which it has become such a habit with him to deny that I was myself tempted to forget its existence. I am aware that at times his want of depth and his sense of humour did not allow him to take in the gravity of the proceedings. At others, such

was the obsession of the scenic that he even failed to recognise your Lordship without the trappings incidental to your office. Having known him from his earliest days, I would inform you that his was one of the kindest natures conceivable. On occasions, in private life, he often proved himself to be as gentle as a woman, it hardly being so much his fault as that of the atmosphere of his calling that publicity showed him at his worst. He could never have harmed a human being, but rather was lavish in his pity when brought into contact with suffering, which I have to own he did his best to avoid. If the affair was sufficiently striking, it was, next to appearing on the boards, his greatest luxury; and, if he happened to decide on the moment, I have seldom known his equal in graceful charity. He was intensely catholic, though credited with being exclusive, but so practised was he in fancying himself others that he was at home with the common heart. I doubt whether the normal man could have done an unkind thing and, when he was cruel, he was unconscious of it, nearly all his mistakes arising from the egoism to which he has alluded, and which was more grotesque than criminal.

“He held a high place among those who spared no pains in the service of the Art to which they were devoted, his self-accusing on that score being as exaggerated as all else about him. None but myself knew how he worked and strove and suffered for this ideal, as I can testify when he was alone after the play was done. His world, which was a comprehensive one, owed him no small debt, nor would he have acquired the

worship of his entourage unless he had proved himself the best of masters to all, from the leading lady to the call boy. Many are the ways which point upwards, and mankind is moved by countless forces towards its betterment. Such a spur the prisoner undoubtedly was, and in the public esteem, which is seldom wrong, he stood for a gay courage and for work excellently done, amounting, sometimes, to a passionate inspiration. He went far to save the city from gloom, but the price he paid was more than once a darkness which tempted him to toy with a pistol.

“He translated many of the best thoughts given to the world, and thus, though piety was not his object, was on the side of the angels. You will, I am sure, be lenient towards the vanity which was as much a part of the man as his fun, and will divide the responsibility between him and an ignorant society which treated him with a flunkeyism and curiosity on a par with that paid to exalted personages. His lapses through the temptation of the Box Office were intelligible, his profession tending to extravagance, as also to a crowd of flatterers, which made it difficult for him to confine himself to the best work, or to sustain ideals conduced to comparative poverty.

“I would ask your Lordship, then, to deal with him largely, as befits the size of his attainments and the breadth of his treatment, both of which, though gifts, were also dangers. My contention is that his popularity was immensely due to painstaking, that he never quailed where the majority would have given in, and that, in

spite of his shortcomings, he left the world brighter than he found it. In conclusion, I would plead that he nobly played his part in helping men and women over many a dark and tedious moment, causing them to laugh through their grief, enlarging their horizon, and often helping them towards heroism."

A smile played over the features of the Judge, as though even he found it difficult to treat the prisoner severely. Yet this was only for a moment, and his questions were full of an earnestness to which the Actor immediately responded. When the Judge asked him of his home life and early intuitions, his eyes moistened and, with the frankness of a child, he confessed to having been so touched in his imagination by the story of the Gospels that he had nearly determined to be a priest, but the following day had forgotten all about it.

As to his vanity, he entirely agreed, but was mainly amused. He stated that he had never felt its heinousness, having so long considered himself unique that even now he justified it, and was inclined to argue the point. The meekness of the Judge began at last to disabuse his mind, and he ended by owning himself to be on this count a fool.

When the Judge questioned him as to morality, the Actor displayed a blend of idealism and inconsistency, as if his sentiments of right and wrong were altogether blurred. He showed little sensitiveness as to the effect of his personal example, which he persisted had nothing to do with such abstract terms as purity, chivalry, or saintliness, by which he had never ceased to be moved.

Any type more receptive of what had reference to beauty, or even to the Deity Himself, than the accused, it would be difficult to conceive, but this tender counsellor discovered him to be singularly dense when it came to what annoyed him in any particular. He was not, however, nearly such a dullard as he seemed, but as it was an invariable rule with him to gratify his inclinations, he found it convenient to ignore all relations between theory and practice.

When the Judge spoke of the matter of money, he treated it as not over-important, nor did he screen himself on the ground of necessary luxuries, which he took for granted. He frankly admitted that the Box Office was a means to an end, that he did not care for gold, being a Bohemian at heart, but that he hated inconvenience, loved display, and desired to do things royally on his own plane. He could not resist adding that his extravagance was also in the nature of an advertisement.

As the Judge touched on the more public aspect of his career, the Actor became more intent, having till then with difficulty sustained his attention, and a look of sadness came over him when he realised how much of his best work had failed. It was evident that here he was hit the hardest, and that he was regretting a personality which had spoilt some of his best productions. Doubtless he recalled how his keenest pleasure had been found in his noblest characters, contrasting with them a life which, in others, would have earned his strongest condemnation. He was stung by the paradox of having said beautiful things, followed by ugly deeds, and in the

twitching of his face you could see the gradual restoration of the child. This was achieved with consummate skill and patience by the Judge, who, passing by what it was useless to refer to, gently brought the Actor back to the man, and proved himself in so doing to be the truest artist of all.

When, in conclusion, the Judge, with pitiless insistence, touched on the point of the influence he had exercised on the drama as a whole, the prisoner winced and, with a new-born agony at the thought of any whom he had misled, burst into tears and begged him to say no more, because this at least he could not bear, and this at least he would give his soul to undo.

In his summing up the Judge remarked, "Yours is a case which has interested me profoundly, and during the recital of which I have been moved by varied feelings. As to your egoism, you were a monomaniac, which fortunately closes that subject. I recognise the largeness of your heart, the charm of your disposition, and the brilliancy of your gifts, but all these things, being totally unmerited, have only laid you under a heavier obligation. You require no words of mine to remind you that, to a great extent, they proved your bane and tended towards your demoralisation, but to a temperament like yours, your own disappointment on this score is no light punishment.

"Wherein you have failed most and wherein you are bound to suffer most is that you have trifled with and even degraded opportunities vouchsafed to few. Called to occupy a position you might have still more adorned,

and endowed with versatility and mirth for the benefit of your fellows, you often fell short of your highest and did incalculable damage. I need not tell you how many have been led astray in following your footsteps; you are already so haunted by the thought that I will not add to your pain. Yet, believe me, though I more than make allowance in my decision, I shall best prove my love by laying on you such a task as shall help you to realise the ideals which you have missed, and to attain those peaks with which alone your aspirations can be satisfied.

“When you leave this Court you shall employ your talents on the same stage as heretofore, but with a different setting. For years you shall occupy a lower place and be entirely unknown. You shall undergo the discipline of being despised and, though strong, you shall become far stronger through suffering. Gradually, and by painful steps, you shall approach the distinction of former days, but even then you shall be baffled and eclipsed by the meanness of others, until you learn to loathe the vanity which vitiated your genius.

“Then, when your soul is born, your imagination will gain a force it never knew and, when your heart is broken, the pathos of your utterance shall melt all who hear it. When you have become nothing in your own esteem, you shall be re-entrusted with the mission for which you secretly long, and you shall present only what your awakened conscience approves. It shall be your care that none about you shall be injured. Having taken your own measurement, you shall wax deadly earnest and accomplish that for which you were des-

tined. You will avoid, instead of courting the mock halo still needed by your colleagues, and you will dare to be real because you have no further use for unearned laurels. You will give to your calling a higher and healthier tone, without denying its legitimate outlet both to laughter and to the heart. All this will cost you much, but the result will be more than worth the price, and you will be able to look into that same glass for professional purposes without self-contempt or hypocrisy. Then, and not till then, when you shall have learned the secret of gaining the heart of the people by the lavish giving of your own, will you be a great actor."

CHAPTER X

CIRCE

HE belonged very much to society. It would have been difficult to discover the smallest defect in her bearing. The most prominent feature was the feeling of comfort she brought with her, and she might have been described as just a womanly woman. Everything about her breathed kindness. Whatever her faults, it was impossible not to call to mind one who was much forgiven because she loved much. Not for a moment did Circe suggest carnality pure and simple, but rather an intense craving to bestow affection where it might be needed. She happened to have been well placed in the world, but, good manners being her forte, she would have been at home anywhere and have given the sense of it to all her surroundings. Her dualism was apparent and, though she was undoubtedly voluptuous, there was an unmistakable hint of the angel.

She was full of brain, had plainly thought out problems, and had made her plans without being influenced by public opinion or accepted standards. Her attitude at the moment was in exact keeping with the position in which she found herself, as she possessed that delightful quality of becoming part of the picture without the least

effort. Being well bred, she was hardly affected by inconvenience, and behaved as if it was perfectly natural that she should be brought up for judgment. Her presence set the onlooker thinking how many must be occupied with the thought of her, and it was hard not to arrive at the wrong conclusion that the fates had been kind to a woman endowed with such power of pleasing. The anomaly about this most selfish being was that she was more concerned with the affairs of others than with her own, though how to explain such a paradox passes comprehension. Her first thought was for the Judge who was being detained on her account, nor was this fanciful, for she was so peculiarly sympathetic that the other person's standpoint immediately struck her and she found herself intent on being what she would have called "extra nice."

"I should like," she said, "to thank you sincerely for having brought me here, by no means against my will, as for years I have longed to arrive at a solution of the riddle how to be good without ceasing to be gay. I fear that what I have to say is very commonplace and cannot appeal to one so far removed from my own level, but at any rate I never deceived myself in what I did, nor ever pretended that it had my entire approval. I was married under the best possible conditions and, when the wedding bells rang, no girl drank more deeply of joy. My husband was for me a demi-god for quite a little time; but, without any fault on his part, save that he was not brilliant, there came over me a lifelessness and a craving for something vivid, coloured, and dangerous, though I had everything mortal could desire.

“Yet there it was, and I was attracted to the illicit for no definite reason, but because the licit was too contracted and too tame. I cannot accuse myself of being carnally inclined beyond the rest, but I felt an overwhelming thirst for new experiences and, in the process, to give myself away. My husband, who was ‘awfully fond of me,’ could not imagine why I could be aught but content, nor, had he asked me directly, could I myself have explained it. Yet my brain went on working and working, and my life seemed to be stopping and stopping, until I came across what promised to fulfil my desire and brought me a sensation which I euphemised by the name of harmony. We arranged matters without any disturbance to my home. The man whose name I bore was busied with his own concerns, and I doubt if he bothered much about anything so long as I came down in the morning looking fresh, and during the day performed my duties of chatelaine.

“I am conscious that I was the reverse of true, but the pity is that I cannot say it caused me the smallest regret. Wrong came to be right after I had taken the first step, and one side of my character was unquestionably improved through an action for which I neither could nor wished to find an excuse. I was sweeter, kinder, and more charitable than I had been before, and though I had to give up praying I deceived myself into thinking the angels nearer, and that existence had taken on a new glory. I no longer despised the courtesan, though I did not stop to wonder why, and the peasant woman became my sister, but society began to lose its charm, while I

developed into a rebel against convention. If I were asked to compare my lover with my husband, the odd thing is that I would never have married the former. Yet, when I think over the wildness of it all, the stolen interviews, the living on the edge, the mysterious blending of my worst with my best, I still cannot pretend to remorse, and believe I should do the same over again."

(Here the Judge gently remarked that the last sentiment was probably premature.)

"Then my friend died and life became shrouded in gloom. I invested him with a halo and kept the romance locked away in a secret drawer, with my most sacred treasures. The mother in me was troubled, I must admit, and I caught myself envying the 'one-man' type of woman whose single love had ever been for her as her religion. Time brought its own cure, or rather a return of the same disease. The old yearning had again and yet again to be satisfied, till I came to the point when, without a 'friend,' the days would have been insupportable. I grew less and less difficult to please, though, for my husband's sake, I never neglected appearances, nor gave him cause to imagine that anything was wrong. The ghastly part of it was that I cared for them all in varying degrees; but I suppose I must have been like an eastern book in a western cover, and even now I cannot in the least understand.

"This it was which kept me tender and soft, while it vivified my brain and, loving knowledge almost as keenly as I did touch, I was for ever striving to learn and to forward my evolution. I wrote, too, and they tell

me that I helped thousands, but here I was a puzzle to myself, for I contradicted my own conduct and pleaded for purity as though I had been a nun. That is my story; and, when my call came to leave, never was there a more tender farewell than my husband gave me, which I knew was undeserved, but I kept my secret even then. Now I am glad to have arrived where, for the first time, I can tell it all and, without one atom of reserve, reveal this *mélange*, which was unspeakably despicable, but the memory of which is inexplicably sweet."

The advocate addressed himself to his task with no hesitation, appearing to know his client intimately, and to be confident of her eventual ascent, though he had often marked with sorrow the downward grade on which she had been travelling. As a rule the advocate manifested feelings either of attraction or repulsion, but in this case, when her counsel interceded for Circe, it was clear that he both sympathised with and hated her character.

"I rise, my Lord," he began, "not only to ask for leniency, but to appeal to the love which is your speciality and of which the accused is by no means ignorant. Incredible as it may appear, she always welcomed our private interviews, regarding me as her dear friend. She had a leaning towards holy things, and the singularity of her make-up is shown by her delight in worship. It is difficult to speak with certainty of what the result might have been if, at her marriage, her soul had met its mental mate, there being that in her blood which is abnormal to her sex, else the world would stand a poor

chance of being saved. Your Lordship alone can decide whether, if she had been gifted with a companion on the intellectual side, the subsequent disaster would have taken place. This woman was instinct with generosity, nor was she happy except in the expression of it. For some psychological reason her emotions refused to be limited to a single safety valve; and I contend that, when this obtains, the patient (which I believe is a fitting term) verges on the incurable, calling not only for medical skill but for ample allowance.

“She refused the former, not desiring freedom, and it was not her good fortune to meet with the latter. Her looseness of conduct, betraying itself more than she was aware in her face and general appearance, prevented the approach of the pious, whom at that time she would have repelled, so that she was left much alone. Not alone, indeed, on the part of those who helped her undoing, though she found herself, when in their company, craving for a holiness which attracted her and, for lack of which, none of her friends could hold her for long. It is beyond my power to describe her agonised attempts to break away from her lower self. Had she been asked, at such moments, what she wished for more than all else, her reply would have been hatred of sin. I doubt if she ever came near it because, though one side of her loathed itself in dust and ashes, so strong was her innate animalism that, as she declared in her statement, wantonness never became for her quite wrong. Her piety was epileptic, and she had fits of it; but she rapidly recovered and, throwing up her hands,

after a while let herself float down the stream. The complaisance of her husband, who possibly guessed more than he knew, but whose hatred of the disagreeable was proverbial, was not in her favour. Could she have gone into a convent at the magical moment, she would have lost her restlessness and become an excellent abbess.

“I regret that I cannot be more lucid in presenting to you this bundle of contradictions, but there is the truth, and its seriousness is the greater since it shows the non-moral standpoint of a vaster number of women in civilised countries than I dare to contemplate. I pray you not to forget that, in her own way, she loved her husband and her children, but that the flood of feeling was too strong for her, swamping her good resolves, and landing her in a morass too pitiable for words. From that quagmire she pleads to you, being too chivalrous to complain lest she should bring one atom of blame on others, but lilies may be even whiter and more luxuriant for the blackness of the soil in which they were nurtured.”

The effect on the Judge was to render him speechless. The movement of his lips showed that he was praying for power to deal wisely with a dilemma appalling both in its frequency and its faithlessness. Calm returned to him without overmuch delay, but it was long enough to portray the penalty of a priesthood that descends into the abyss from which it strives to rescue the perishing. He then spoke gently with the accused:

“Tell me of your childhood and how it was passed.”

“I call to mind the loveliest home, where everything

conduced to make for good. There was an old chapel close to the Hall which was my favourite haunt, and I loved the hills, the country, the lake in the park, the running water, and the animals, especially my pets. I used to wander for hours telling stories to myself about the saints, and there was always a knight or two thrown in."

"Did any one help or advise you when you were young?"

"Yes, indeed, and though I forgot his teaching, he remained my best friend, whatever happened, crediting me with the highest aims."

"To what do you attribute your disloyalty to the teaching of your early guide?"

"I cannot say; it just came. I was for ever and for ever wanting something, though I could not have told what, but I gave no thought to the unhappy who were calling out for my service."

"How was it that you did not hear their sighing and their groaning as you knelt by the Altar?"

"I wish I knew, but the religion of my childhood was hardly more than a day-dream of which I was the central figure. The Gospel was all too wonderful and too beautifully old. I had the dearest little books at my bed-head, but the language in which they spoke was of so long ago that they had no bearing on my days. I could not imagine that the thorns were meant for me who loved the flowers."

"Would you say that your upbringing was responsible for your later declension?"

"It seems like one book, and the early chapters breathed the same fantasy which ran throughout the volume."

"Were you prone to melancholy during your girlhood?"

"I had fits of sadness after any great elation or after reading the mediæval love stories which I found in the library."

"When you were a woman, did you suffer from no satiety after your indulgence?"

"I hardly think I did, for then it was tangible and terribly real. Sometimes I would weep, but I made up some fairy tale as to how at last I had found the blue rose and things would be better, if not the best, this time."

"As you grew older, did you feel sick to think how you had spoiled the story and sullied your soul?"

"No, it would have been cowardly, and we were brought up not to go back, even on the devil, if we had played into his hands. I took it all as it came, though I was conscious of the shreds and patches, but I would not own it, and I *did* have happy moments which it would be ungrateful to deny."

"Did you never realise the vileness of your hypocrisy and that you were worse than the courtesan, in that your actions were on a level with hers while you still posed as being a wife and retained your position in the world?"

"Sometimes it came over me, but I solaced myself by thinking that we were different, and that, at any rate,

no trading came in and my own sinning was veiled in much beauty."

"Did not the thought of your children come to your aid, and how could you find it possible to look them in the face again?"

"Why such confusion did not send me mad I cannot say, for I loved them passionately and often prayed that they might not have the same nature as mine."

"Did it not strike you that a mother's influence lies not so much in what she says or does as in what she is?"

"I felt that, and knew that I must be a pollution to them, so I handed them over more and more to governesses, in whose selection I was extremely careful, and who could talk to them of things of which I was unworthy to speak."

"How was it they did not serve to bring you back?"

"More than once they almost did, when I kissed them as they slept and vowed with blinding tears that, for their sakes, I would be clean."

"Did they love you in return?"

"More than many good women are loved, but it proved a temptation and cheated me into thinking that, after all, my private yielding did them no harm."

"And their father, whom you profess to have loved throughout?"

"He remained to me the dearest man in the world, and there was nothing that I would not have done for him, except to give up a sensation which had become for me as my daily food."

"Did you ever think of his honour when you endangered your own?"

"For his own sake I often asked him to take me away where I thought I would be a better wife, and where I resolved to think of nothing but his interests."

"How could you go on caring for him while you were fouling his nest and doing him the greatest injury that one can do another?"

"Here I am at a loss for an answer, but I can swear that I cared and that I have never known another man with whom I would have lived."

"Does the thought of him hurt you now?"

"More than any other, except a vague one that I have offended hopelessly against God, as I can see by the sorrow on your face."

(“Not hopelessly,” the Judge remarked, and tears fell from his eyes, though they seemed to be more of joy than of pain.)

"Did you not realise that, in your descent, you were dragging down your friends?"

"I deluded myself that I would not have hurt a hair of their heads, but so distorted was my view that I did not resent it when they called me the saviour of their lives."

"Can you recall one who ultimately became bettered by these unhappy ventures?"

"None."

"Did you realise that you were undermining the basis of society, or that you had taken a solemn vow to forsake all other?"

"I see now what I did not see then, but if you put

it to me so bluntly I shall despair and lose sight of the lining which silvered my darkest clouds."

"If you had the chance, would you give up all that side and become one of the godly matrons to whose ranks you pledged yourself at your marriage?"

"I am afraid I should not unless I was quite old and, brutal as it may seem, I fear I should still dream of the past and wish it might return."

The Judge, in finally addressing the prisoner, continued to adopt the tone of his talk, so unwilling did he seem to put her in the pillory, yet from his lips came sterner words than were his wont.

"I wish to explain to you," he said, "that your life has done graver harm than a more openly wicked one, though, strangely enough, not so much to yourself as to the sisterhood to which you belong. Your own sensitiveness in sinning against your ideal has brought with it sufficient punishment. I grant that you were complex above the average, to an extent never intended by nature, but it is well to remember the natural law that the indulgence of parents may reappear in the immorality of their offspring. I would warn you not to excuse yourself by that worst of subterfuges, 'non-moral.' You must admit that you sinned against the first principles of integrity, and dishonoured the names of wife and mother, though no one can accuse you of falling short of the tenderness implied by both. When I think that you publicly denounced divorce to save your own face, I should be tempted to speak with unalloyed disgust, if it were not for the thorn with which you were buffeted.

"I, too, have heard your prayers, every one of which was genuine when it was uttered, but the springs of self-pleasing must be looked for nearer the source. The foundations of your character were sapped by the charm of your home, and by those long walks when you pictured the nuns and the knights in mystic fellowship. The romance of the chapel and the snare of its dim religious light prepared you for the fallacies which followed. When your teacher, for whom you preserved a laudable reverence, failed to bring you up soberly on the Word, he sowed the seeds of irreparable harm. When he omitted to point out that broken bread and outpoured wine conveyed the prospect of unselfishness and sacrifice, he little knew that he was helping to form habits which resulted in sacrilege. Here it was that the venom began its deadly work, rendering subsequent self-control well-nigh impossible, nor is it surprising that, when you thought you were devout, you often woke to find you were sensual.

"Your greatest guilt lies in having endangered the virtue of other women, not by your words, of which you were uniformly careful, but by your atmosphere, which suggested a poisonous perfume. You were false to the fundamental truth that woman was made to be a help meet for the difficulties of man, and not a hindrance meet for his emasculation. Unwittingly you retarded the liberation of your sex by your license, and your conduct fostered the delusion that friendship can be blessed without the preservation of holiness. Where the calibre of both calls forth sincere devotion, the emotion is too intense to admit of any medium. Herein

your charm added to the curse; but, knowing that you feel this in your heart, I cannot add to your anguish. Anything sadder, anything more contrary to the divine intention it is impossible to imagine, but from the moment its meaning is mastered, no living force becomes half so effective in bringing about the new heaven and the new earth which are destined to arrive.

“As for your penalty, I have nought to say except to leave you to think it out after you have heard the undisguised truth. You are too religious in yourself to need indirect guidance, and without a word you know precisely the path you are called upon to tread. Little is required in a character like yours but the foregoing of your own will. As birds fly, your trend will then, but not till then, be upward. To your aid in this emprise will come your almost boundless affection, your entire liberty from prejudice, and your rare freedom from social distinctions. When your perverted passions are once impressed into this new endeavour, you will, ere long, return to the best lessons in the ruined chapel, and to the help which might have come to you from your hills. Though you cannot obviate the injuries of which you have been guilty, you will find yourself asking, if not for their removal, that they may issue in the same repentance which has come to yourself. Above all, you shall find that the fairy stories were true, namely, that men and women, dedicated to God, were created for His glory and to love without ceasing to be pure. Your old teacher shall see of the travail of his soul.”

CHAPTER XI

THE SENTIMENTALIST

IT WAS evident that so poor a creature would have a bad time before such a Judge. His manner was annoying and his meaningless expression contrasted unfavourably with the force, however deplorable, to be seen in those more criminally inclined. The difficulty was to put one's finger on any special flaw in the Sentimentalist, who was faultlessly attired and had the face of an insipid angel. He looked supremely pleased with himself, nor had he any intention of being disturbed. The accused had lost every vestige of the solid in his mawkish and unhealthy mode of existence. Doubtless he had been the subject of unlimited homage, which had tended to prevent self-knowledge, and which had by no means been rebuked as it deserved. His hair was too long, his blue eyes lacked depth, and his profile was, in his peculiar language, that of a Greek god. His name had been in the mouth of thousands who had hung on his words, never dreaming how they had undermined their lives, but quoting them as wonderful, heavenly, intense, suggestive of moonlight, or other epithets which were current coin among his admirers.

Meanwhile, the recipient of this adulation remained

unmoved, and there was no line on his face hinting at pain or any other inconvenience. His smile, which had been styled seraphic, soon palled, and it became apparent that the case had to do with one of the worst enemies of manliness. He was so occupied with his own affairs that for a time he did not notice the Judge, but suddenly glancing up, he was disconcerted by the directness of his gaze and the quiet rebuke conveyed. Though he had touched the high-water mark of conceit, even he felt that play-acting was done with; and, giving way to enforced candour, he rose from his seat with an elaborate bow.

“I feel that I must ask a thousand pardons for any trouble I may be causing, but I am suffering, for the first time, from an attack of sincerity, for which I would respectfully apologise. Though I cannot grasp how my concerns can interest you, I would inform you that for many years I have led a distinguished career in deluding the world, and in stirring up emotions which I have always suppressed in myself lest they should endanger my exceptional beauty.

“I can hardly recall an element of romance which I have not used for all it was worth. Soon after my arrival at puberty (you will find this expression in one of my novels), I was struck by the Bible as full of excellent passages for the poet, and the central Figure of the Gospels presented to me a union of pathos and power in which I detected the making of first-class material. Some of the women in the Book, too, took my fancy, and I made a note of them as the groundwork of my future heroines,

nor did I consider it unbecoming to weave a love story between one of them and the Saviour of mankind. Having thus carefully baited my trap for the suburbs, I rapidly proceeded to warmer fiction. Not that I ever guessed for what triumphs I was destined, but I wrote when the afflatus came over me, though after having accomplished titanic tasks I was not in the least fatigued, but, in the words of my intimates, as fresh as a daisy.

“My books achieved an unheard-of sale, under a nom de plume which was in itself a caress. Ere long I was idolised both in my own and other countries as a constant delight, and as a magician whose pen was ‘a feather dropped from an angel’s wing’ (a description in one of the journals which I cannot forbear repeating). The common people read me gladly, but I was also much patronised by the middle class; and society enjoyed my publications, though they affected to be strangers to them. My pet aversion was seriousness, and I regarded the Puritans as showing execrable taste. I loved wars, or rather stories culled from the battlefield, scenes of carnage, and dying farewells from a young man, generally in the Guards. I was a perfect king at sunsets, or the depiction of countries where the blood ran riot, where monks were tempted and where nuns were suddenly aware of impulses which made them blush as they contemplated their vows.

“My stories were, for the most part, Byron-and-water, but I was careful to introduce a large vein of religion, satisfying the conscience of the reader and enabling daughters to assure their mothers that the book was not only

entrancing but all right. I did my best to soften the world, and am glad to think that I never overtaxed the intelligence, but acted as a hammock in which my worshippers could swing to and fro, as they lazily drank in the honey of my flowing words. The curate served me well, and once I felt moved to subscribe to a fund for his better support, having found him a certain draw as I pictured the neophyte, gifted with unrivalled eloquence, seldom having time for his food, and well-nigh dying of consumption. He is saved, in the nick of time, by the daughter of a millionaire, who, having found that he has pawned his penultimate suit, whisks him off to the Riviera and is later united to him at St. George's, Hanover Square.

"The hospitals, too, brought me no small gain, and some of my nurses are considered immortal. In spotless uniforms, they hung over the patient and moistened his lips, preparatory to his convalescence, when most of them felt that their hearts ached with an unutterable void. This was my style, though from time to time I assumed profound learning, until I was called 'awfully deep,' without neglecting the ingredient of wonder as to what it all meant, or how it would end in the last chapter. I regarded work as vulgar, and nearly all my subjects had white hands, while I was strong on suicides, elopements, big game shooting, and a few other distractions which made an hour pass like a minute, cheated the slow train, and beguiled the week-end. Were I asked what I *did*, I should find it difficult to answer, having been no advocate of doing, but rather of dreaming and of transform-

ing boresome business into a *dolce far niente*, spent in a blossomed bower.

“All this secured for me large profits, to which I pretended complete indifference, being far removed, in the eyes of my readers, from anything so banal as a bank balance. Yet this it was which regulated my plans and about which I was mainly occupied as my pen flew over the paper, inspired by a vision of wealth and indulgence in my special foibles. It was meat and drink to me to hear myself talked about, and if I chanced upon a place where my books were not the vogue, I immediately found it dull and changed my quarters for a more appreciative climate. Even my powers fail to describe my self-centredness, and there was a fascination in my prolific productiveness which defies words.

“Were I questioned as to whether I had a shadow of regret, my answer would be in the negative, so inebriated was I with the thought of those countless volumes which my habit was to turn out quarterly, and which, after a judicious *réclame*, attained such popularity that a person was reckoned a fool if he had not perused their pages. At this moment, instead of an avowal, which I believe was the primary object of my coming here, I should prefer to read to your Lordship some of my most moving and exquisite fancies, dashed off when the muse inspired me, which I feel sure would deeply touch even a serious person like yourself. I am afraid I have forgotten such details as my own people, for I made a point of burying all humble associations, however virtuous, desiring to be known under a name which I refrain from mentioning,

as some power prevents further deception. There is my confession, if it deserves to be so called; and I trust that my effusion has been in the best taste, without causing you the smallest displeasure, but, on the other hand, contributing a graceful diversion."

The advocate was hard put to it to defend this darling of the lending libraries. Though his single thought since his client's birth had been the evolution of his soul, he felt that he had miserably failed. He had indeed done his best, but he had discovered that the gods themselves depend upon reciprocity. Constantly, when he had knocked at the door of the Sentimentalist's heart, he had found him out, until he came to the conclusion that there was nothing to be at home. He had waited, times without number, till he should be on his back, or, better still, fail in one of his productions, but he was always remarkably well, never formed the centre-piece of a tragedy, and became, increasingly, a proverb for endless editions. The prisoner's friend was, however, equal to the occasion because of the love in his heart, and nerved himself to plead with extra vigour by reminding himself that his subject was an immortal soul.

"I rise, my Lord, to crave your mercy, though not to interfere with your justice, seeing that the accused is to be pitied for having become impervious to truth. I, who have never ceased to care for him, find it hard to offer any excuse for the methods of his life, but I fearlessly maintain that, with his temperament, the result was inevitable, and that the public taste in demanding what he supplied was largely to blame. My contention is

that no one was compelled to read him, and that the slope which led to this present descent was made dangerously easy by all associated with the transaction. He had his better moments, and I have known him cry over some of his own books, though I am bound to own that it never impaired his health.

“The most lenient view of his conduct is that, in the process, he became impregnated with the hatefulness of pain, the tedium of virtue, and the discomfort of discipline, forces not only helpful but necessary to the formation of character. My client never intended to do positive harm; in fact, from what I know of him, he cannot be accused of having had any intentions at all. Eaten up by a sense of self which became a monomania, he wrote not so much to amuse, not so much to cause a thrill, as to be in the public eye, and your Lordship will concede that, when this obsession arrives at a certain point, its victim is incurable.

“It is also true that he was by no means proof against the money which poured in, being able to surround himself with every comfort, to adopt æsthetic tastes, and to pose as one of the immortals. I rejoice, for his sake, that he has come up for judgment, since there remains in him much which might become great if transformed by the alchemy of hardship. His imagination suggests a catholicism and knowledge of the heart which your Lordship will not throw away, and I pray that you may consider him in the light of his age, so that, in his re-making, your judgment may not incline to the side of harshness. My longing is that this man, whom I love in proportion

to his need, may rise as a phoenix from his ashes to a nobler purpose and to a cleaner virility."

The Judge looked stern but sorrowful, and in his questions to the accused betrayed surprise at the arrest of mental development in a race thus easily gulled.

"I would like to ask whether you considered the effect of your rubbish on your readers."

"I must respectfully demur at the word 'rubbish,' and as I was a slave to the artistic temperament, it goes without saying that I considered no one else."

"Were you conscious of the insincerity of what you called your 'work'?"

"To be frank, I was unconscious of anything except *la gloire*, and the pay."

"Were you never aware of the untruth with which you clothed everything you touched, producing a glamour entirely non-existent, and paralysing the energies of your patrons?"

"I regarded reality as dull and bourgeois, while the term working-man jarred on my nerves."

"You have never regretted enervating youth and thus helping it to fall an easy prey to the temptations which it was bound to meet?"

"No, indeed. One of my favourite proverbs was that the man who loves not wine, woman, and song remains a fool his whole life long."

"Did you know anything of the high life and even royalty which you so often described?"

"I found that there were more ways than one of getting accurate information on the subject, and that at no great

cost. It is interesting to note that what is said in the chamber can be published on the housetop — for a consideration."

"Were you never staggered at the waste of time for which you were answerable, or at the hours spent over the worthless folly of your feuilletons?"

"I have already said that this was nothing to me, and it was not my affair how people lived or how people died."

"I suppose it did not come home to you that you ruined the peace of many a home and perceptibly added to the senselessness of your generation?"

"So long as I scored heavily, I refused to contemplate such horrors, which I failed to connect in the remotest degree with my efforts."

"Did you ever genuinely love? Did your heart ever ache, and were you ever carried away, to the loss of yourself, in favour of another?"

"I have always objected to intensity, and when I took to myself a wife, it was with cool deliberation, being careful that she should have both title and income. I was not in the least ashamed to live for a while upon her ladyship, which I looked on as paying her a compliment."

"Your prayers and your inner life?"

"I preferred a religion full of superstitions and legends, and of a historic past associated with mysteries and picturesque worship, with the least possible allusion to ethics. It pleased me, and I missed it whenever I found myself deprived of its melodrama and warmth."

"You appear to have been unconscious that touching the ark might bring about your death."

"A charming story that, but I cannot see its bearing on the present day."

"And you did not think of what might happen to your country if it was in danger, or that it might one day need all the grit and all the go which you did your best ruthlessly to destroy?"

"I confess that more than once I drew such a picture, but I was careful so to fill it in with pomp and love that fear or unrest was soon forgotten."

"I presume you would have discarded the notion of hell, or after consequences of any kind as following a life bereft of high purpose and careless of ruin in its train?"

"With all respect, hell is a word which is erased from polite society; and, as for after consequences, my ideas of deity amounted to a floating essence in which lovers could be united to eternal music, wafted from ethereal spheres."

At last the Judge showed manifest signs of distress at being thus defeated in his attempt to extract from the Sentimentalist one shade of pathos.

"I have vainly tried," he said, "in my questions, to furnish the gentlest hint of the damage you may have done in your passage through the world. I would now point out to you that they who are at the back of actions are often more guilty than they who commit them. The responsibility attaching to authorship cannot be overstated, and that pen, which in other hands has proved one of the greatest blessings the world has ever known,

has in yours been the reverse. I am aware of the piety with which your books were interlarded, I know of the references to the loftiest and purest sentiments with which you gilded the pill before it was taken. I grant you had a touch of genius, or rather a nimble wit, and that your books have served to chase away many a dull hour, but your sin lies in not caring what you wrote compared to what you got. Once let this be the standard of a writer, there is no limit to the curse he may bring.

“Your crime was that you enervated instead of bracing, that you tempted instead of inspiring, and that you supplied a series of mirages which misrepresented facts to the peril of your pupils. You made men glory in sin rather than loathe it, and you treated women as channels of their indulgence rather than ideals by which they might be assisted towards better and higher things. You little know what you did when you tampered with the young, whom you should have stiffened for their campaign, but whom you did your utmost to render unfit for the battle before them. You cheapened sorrow and reduced love to a sickening sentiment — the mother of sloth and sensual desire.

“You were as a serpent in the garden of the world, enticing it to eat of the tree in its midst and, without a single tear, watching men and women as they were driven from Paradise. You dared to make capital out of the most sacred professions and, under the excuse of popular treatment, you brought the highest places into disrepute. In a word, you made sin exceeding easy, and virtue exceeding hard, while the trivial round and the common

task became impossible to those drugged by your romances. Believe me, there are thousands living to-day who are worse because you sapped their energies, roused their passions, and rendered them indifferent to the calls of country.

“The result of such influences as yours is that climbing of every kind is at a discount, and that the education of women, in the face of the finest efforts, is frustrated. What is still more mischievous, the horror of it will become less and less recognised so long as people like yourself write as if man’s chief interest in the other sex centred round the harlot or the heiress. You have to learn that you and your fellow scribblers do much to prevent progress, to throttle civic aspirations, and to reproduce the spirit of the harem in a Teutonic people. Herein lies the deadliness of your output, and it is hard to use words too strong in insisting on the call for a tonic if the Empire about which you ranted is to be saved. You must accept it from me that your life has been anything but a kind one. nor can I imagine a more terrible punishment than one day awakening to the fact that, like the prophet of old, you have for love of gold betrayed your nation by rendering it a prey to its passions and, as a consequence, to its enemies.

“It may take you some time to arrive at it, but you must be taught that sweet poison is more fatal than a revolver shot, and that no man has the right, by a single word, to add to the temptations of his fellows, who have too many without his aid. You will have to undergo a course of hard labour till you discover that sentimen-

talism no longer comes in. Nothing short of this will get into you the fear of God or of anything else. You will be reduced to the necessity for action, when you will shudder at the poetic as unable to see you through the hour of stress. That stress must last till you have ceased to employ as a scapegoat the odious excuse of your artistic temperament. The very term shall become an abomination to you when you have discovered that it is viler than straightforward yieldings to nature. In its stead you shall, in your cell, make acquaintance with true romance, and with the vastness of the field which is calling for imagination, tempered by trial, to engage in the highest service. You shall find that you were not born in vain, and that no novel half so enthusing has ever been written as the volume, unsmeared by amorous suggestion, which you shall yet produce.

“There will steal into your heart by degrees a new patriotism which will cause you to long for your country’s good. You shall learn through sorrow that she needs men strong, clean, vigorous, pious, and women chaste, tender, useful, devout, if the honour of her homes is to be preserved. You may fall many times, but in the long run you shall win. When you have achieved manliness and modesty, into your hands shall once more be put your pen, with which you shall strive to cancel your previous trifling. You shall make it a rule without exception to write only such stories as go to the breeding of heroes and heroines. You will find yourself outworn by each effort, however small, and the writer shall be anonymous, but his work shall be strong.”

CHAPTER XII

THE BOOKMAKER

HERE was nothing about him to betray his calling, and he might have been taken for a most respectable gentleman who regularly attended his chapel and was a pattern of benevolence. Closer inspection revealed a sinister look which created suspicion, making it difficult to imagine how he could elicit sympathy on the part of him who was to conduct the trial. Here again, as in other instances, the impression grew that, so long as people were chiefly their own enemies, they were subjects for boundless compassion, but that the worst were those who, from the vantage ground of safety, tempted others to their destruction. Compared with this offence weakness became insignificant, and the chasm between sin and wickedness was self-evident. The absurdity of portraying Satan as an object of abhorrence speaks for itself, nor would his victims be so numerous if they could discern his approach. The present instance was a case in point, and it was not surprising that many should fall into the toils of this bland but pestilential individual.

The Bookmaker was suavity itself, and unmoved by the smallest qualms of a conscience which had long been

seared. The thought of judgment was foreign to his nature, the sense of right and wrong having been done to death by a combination of good-fellowship and craft, preventing penitence. All efforts failed to detect the weak point in his harness through which an arrow from the Judge might find its way. One was more than usually thrown back on infinite Love as alone able to change the hard rock into flowing water.

The entrance of the Judge being delayed, possibly by design, the accused began, in spite of himself, to turn things over in his mind, thus illustrating the value of solitary confinement for a certain type of prisoner. The isolation evidently told on the Bookmaker, and the stillness presented an unendurable contrast to the shouting of the odds amid the flare of the race-course. All his self-confidence gone through the process of thought, alarm took possession of him. By the time the Judge came in terror was written on his face, and he wore the look of a man who had staked his all on the wrong horse and lost, with nothing but black ruin before him. The Judge was gracious as ever, though no one could have mistaken the difference when he had to deal with cases calculated to evoke his sterner side. Not that he was not kindness itself as he set himself to the task of breaking a heart which he intended to heal, but only the initiated could foresee the line he was likely to take.

“I rise,” the Bookmaker said without any preliminaries, “to state my case, from no desire to make an elaborate confession, but solely because I find myself in a Court of Justice from which I cannot escape. Till now

it has never meant for me more than the payment of a trifling fine; and, if you expect me to express sorrow for what I have done, I fail to see where regret comes in. What I say is that there is nothing like sport, that horse-racing is an honourable institution, and that the man who does not patronise it or liquor is no patriot. To my thinking the country would soon be ruined without it, and I am glad to know that among my clients I not only numbered the nobility and gentry but could go higher still if I cared to show my books. I don't suppose that even you would say there was any harm in having 'a bit on,' and the whole fun lies in the uncertainty. Again, what I say is that it is a grand sight to see thousands enjoying themselves in the open air, watching a struggle between as noble creatures as God ever made, but still more taking their pleasure in making bets, with good cheer and fair women thrown in. I don't see how a man could improve on it, and it would be a crime and a shame if betting were put down.

"Not that I used to bet myself; I was a family man and had my own to look after. When I stood under my umbrella, you may take my word I was as sober as a judge, though I liked to hear the corks popping and to feel that things were fairly humming. Naturally this made for trade, and when I returned of an evening, content with the net result (though I had my bad days like other people), I slept like a child and looked forward to the next meeting. I took a real pride in my home, and congratulate myself on having added largely to it since I got on, but at first it was a poor game, and I had to do

many things which I would not have stooped to later. Once on your feet, it is wonderful how you can keep yourself respectable, and even do a bit of good by the way, so that again I say that horse-racing is a noble sport and, if every one has to live somehow, this is about as good a way as I can imagine. Why, I knew our minister well, and his wife and mine were the best of friends, since of course I shut off my public life when the day was done, and, if anything was needed in the parish, I was not the last to subscribe. I was always strong about keeping Sunday, which I looked on as part of the Tory constitution, so I closed my accounts on Saturday night and didn't believe in making it a day of business.

"I know this sounds a contradiction, but there it is, and you must take me as I am. I could never have become the success I proved to be if I had not been a careful man, and if I had myself been a prey to the excitement through which I steadily built up my fortune. I don't mind owning, that when I talk in this strain I begin to feel more uncomfortable than I ever have before, but you see it is all new to me, and so long as I can remember I have had no time to think, or, if I had, I tried to square my conscience by religious observances and by kidding myself that I did no injury to any one. Do to others as you would be done by, say I, which is a better sermon than you hear preached by most parsons. The odd thing is that none of my youngsters have ever been on a race-course, nor ever shall, though how I reconcile that fact with all I said about sport I cannot explain. The world is a queer place, and I expect, if the truth were known,

most of us are a bit of a mixture. If I could once have seen the wrong of it, I believe I should have been the first to give it up, but where would have been the good of making such a promise after the interest on my capital gave me enough to live on? If I had my way, though, I should stop betting among the poorer classes, but for those who have the money to throw away, I cannot as yet understand why it is bad, and if you can make this clear to me I shall esteem it a favour.

"The fact is that my life was more of a routine than outsiders would believe, until I became so artful, without exactly deceiving, that I could reckon on my earnings each year within a few hundreds. Excuse my remarking that, though you have not said a word, you, as it were, put me out of countenance, and I hardly like to own to the real motive which prompted me and which your silence seems to invite. You see my great desire was to build up a family, and I had what is called the hoarding instinct. I cannot quite say where I got it from, except that I had the Jew in my blood, but we have been Christians for some time and, though my father did happen to keep a public house, he was a staunch teetotaler. I never had much book-learning, which I hated, but I saw that I could do better on the turf, so I began by degrees, needless to say under another name. It came to me naturally, and I liked the company into which it brought me, for it gratified me to rub shoulders with the noblest in the land. As for the young ones who plunged rather heavily and were not able to pay, I made it a rule not to be too lenient with them, as I had been taught to be a

great believer in honesty, and it was bad for them to be let off too easily. Besides, you always found that there was something they could raise money on to save their good name, and, if they were reduced to it, they could pick up an heiress and recover that way. If you look into it, it is not exactly fine, and it gets worse every moment as it grows plainer. Sometimes, on settling day, my heart would nearly break at the stories I had to listen to, but it was a comfort to see my bank balance growing and to feel that I could send my boys to one of the best public schools where they would be able to hold their own and, in after years, to hobnob with the aristocracy.

“My girls, also, were extra pretty, and I knew too much of life to doubt that it would be difficult to get them well placed; this made me the Bookmaker I was, till I became a proverb for a good heart coupled with perfect integrity. Still, I had to be careful, which is why I kept humble and remained a Dissenter, but my children seemed terribly struck with the Church and it was grand to hear them talking of its traditions, though I fancy my own forebears could have quoted longer ones. This is by the way, but if I have not filled up the spaces it is because I prefer limiting myself to the outline, and the shading is dark enough. But you will allow that it is something to found a name, to leave the world further on than your parents, and to think of your descendants as one day in the enclosure without knowing, as I trust they never may, that their ancestor shouted, ‘Two to one, bar one.’ (Here the Bookmaker evidently forgot, in favour of social success, his diatribe against racing

for his own.) This is my position, and how can I complain when I have done so well, and when there is not a corner in my life which I have not so arranged that no one may be able to throw a stone, except, of course, a few who never would, as it would mean exposing themselves?

“Your face asks me how I can bear the thought of what I have left behind, but, to be frank, the only thing that occurs to me is the amount of money I have saved. Much as I should like to feel that blessed pity which I hold shows man at his best, it is useless to say I do, else I should have to give the whole lot back, and then where would my children be? The boys at the board school and the girls going out to service! Don’t be too hard on me, then, for God’s sake, don’t be too hard, for I have had a fairly bad time already, and there was hell enough on the turf, though to men like me it became our only heaven. Yet before I sit down let me admit that I would rather be one person than any favour you could grant me, and that one person respected, straightforward, with a pile of money to give away. What I long for most of all is to be able to express my love with my real name attached (which I have written on a slip of paper), and that it should be done under the auspices of the religion which I have denied, and the denial of which is my worst shame.”

The advocate felt that he was dealing with a gigantic evil, the more fatal because officially sanctioned and effectively disguised. He recognised, no man better, the opposite poles in the character of the prisoner, who had often admitted him to his company, though he had

seldom taken his advice. He was moved by the imperative need of humanity to get outside of itself, and by the sardonic fact that the most successful traders on this score were those who took special care not to give way to it. Had the Bookmaker been a drunkard, or immoral, or a gambler, his task would have been a simpler one. He was oppressed by the knowledge that the heads of this profession represented a phlegmatic considered system which, with a hellish aspect of harmlessness, cast an organised network over the whole community. He mentally saw one of the loveliest spots in Europe defiled by the same cunning, followed by a vision of the votaries of fashion caught in the same web, down to the lowest gambling den in every capital. He was thinking of the touts in the streets, the factory girls tempted to risk their pence, and the innumerable idiots who, without knowing the end of a horse, hoped to make a coup without work, emptied the till, cheated their masters, broke a wife's heart, ended behind the bars, or made a hole in the river through remorse. He then glanced at this model of correctness in the dock, whom he classed with the charming croupier in his immaculate dress suit. Yet he did not forget the other side of the picture and much in the Bookmaker which afforded a plea in his defence.

He realised, as only they who love can, that this man had not intended a tithe of the evil he had caused. He took into consideration that he was extraordinarily ignorant, however cute, and that his middle-class nature, without any actual villainy, laid him open to wiles which it was beyond him to perceive.

“I am moved, my Lord,” said the advocate, “to plead for the prisoner by a strong sense of duty and of sorrow for the obtuseness which made it possible for such a character to adopt such a career. I have long been on terms of intimacy with him, but, try as I would, could never bring him to face the anomaly of his heart and conduct. Sociability, which was his special feature, conduced to his popularity among those who allowed him to fleece them. What impresses me most, and it must mean still more to your Lordship, is the impulse the accused has given to a tendency inherent in some of the most gifted of the race. I refer to the distortion of that quality of abandonment without which few great things have been achieved, and apart from which most high endeavour would be unknown.

“The history of the prisoner is fraught with sadness, and he has related it with an ingenuousness which anticipates much I might have said on his behalf. With Semitic tendencies strong in him, his nature would appear to have been warped by previous treachery to that grandest of creeds, so that he seems to have retained many of the worst characteristics of his nation, while discarding the rules and the reverence prominent in its best exponents. He was therefore a religious man without being religious, and the root of the evil lay in his continuing the cowardice which influenced those before him to profess belief in the Crucified because He had become the fashion of the day. To please all men became his object and, in the end, his snare, for he soon slipped into ingratiating himself for his own purposes.

He had a natural leaning towards bedizement, though he made a rule of avoiding diamonds, but the Shylock in him was unable to resist the passion for speculation.

“He did not for one instant regard betting as a crime; his great idea was to build up a fortune, which he looked on as a sign of the Divine favour, in the same way as the patriarchs treated an increase in their flocks or herds. For his actions I have no extenuating words, being aghast at the self-deception of which men may become capable, but, since my office is to call attention to the best in my client, I boldly assert that there has seldom been a better husband or a better father than the prisoner. His devotion to the memory of his parents was admirable, and so generously inclined was he, that no wonder the minister found him to be a good man and more charitable than many in his congregation otherwise employed. Reason tells me that the accused will have to undergo a heavy sentence, but I would ask you to accommodate it to his moral vision. I feel convinced that your Lordship’s object is to restore the true man which flourished at his hearth, but was withered by his contact with the world.”

The Judge listened to both prisoner and advocate with rapt attention, it being evident that the subtlety of the situation had not escaped him. You could not but feel that he would willingly have risked his life not only for his friends but for the many, though he would have stamped as selfish a similar venture made for sheer sensation. He addressed the Bookmaker with a respect increased by his advocate’s statement of the case, though

it made his comments the more cutting in dealing with the occupation to which the accused had been devoted.

“Considering your kindness of heart,” he said, “did you never picture to yourself the havoc you caused in countless homes, whilst so attached to your own?”

“I can’t say I did; it all came under the heading of business.”

“Were you not struck by the lowness of the surroundings of a race-course, which would never obtain save for speculation in some form or other?”

“I disliked it extremely and, as I became better known, I kept more aloof from it. But I argue that human nature is human nature, and things are working themselves out somehow.”

“Did you feel any remorse over those mere boys whom you deliberately sent to perdition, while you flattered them with an obsequiousness beyond words, until you got them into your clutches?”

“Now and then, before I had been long at it, but custom deadens, and soon I never gave it a thought.”

“How far do you reckon that the patronage of the great had a share in making you the public curse which you became?”

“It went a good way and helped to banish any sense of sin, provided it could be conducted so pleasantly.”

“Did it never strike you that their women-kind were imbibing the same spirit and were insensibly becoming harder and more brutal in proportion as they were defying their gentler nature?”

“Yes, it did come over me, and that is the part that

revolted me, but it became evident that, save for their presence, our best meetings would have been almost empty."

"Do you mean to tell me that you were not stung when you saw some young girl make her first bet and knew without the shadow of a doubt that she was on the slant downwards, till one day no true womanhood would be left?"

"I did feel all that, especially in the case of a beautiful face and a real lady; but if you ask me such pointed questions, I shall begin to think myself akin to a murderer, which is the last thing I contemplated."

"Did you realise that betting has a lurid side, that it is the enemy of the sport which it affects, that from the highest it percolates to the lowest, that the press is poisoned by it, that women congregate together to gloat over the turn of a card, that men are frenzied by the wine of it till they care for no living soul on earth, that the boys who play pitch and toss in the streets are qualifying for criminals, and that, once this thing has become a habit, honour disappears and the fall only depends on the strength of the trial?"

"Now that you say so I know that every word is true, but the fear of the Lord would have prevented me from doing such things myself, and God knows I never associated my calling with this general disaster."

"Do you know so little of life as not to understand that the gambler and the devotee have a common longing for infinity which lands its victims in heaven or hell?"

"You are getting too deep for me, and in my old re-

ligion this was hardly known. I have heard it spoken of about the best Jew who ever lived, but surely you paint matters a bit too black, and there is a lighter aspect which helps to pass the time and gives a flip to things otherwise shockingly monotonous."

"I notice this is the excuse you all use, but it is not in the least true and is never quoted by the sufferers themselves, at least before their convalescence. Tell me whether, if you had the chance of returning whence you came, you would continue as you were before?"

"I doubt whether I should feel the harm of it for long, and I should be drawn back into the vortex, whatever resolves I might make."

"How so, after hearing all that is involved?"

"Your presence and your charm have changed my point of view for the moment, but it would not last if I were alone for any length of time. My only chance is to keep entirely quit of it, seeing that it would be a much more deadly thing to revert after my eyes have been opened."

"Does not your heart ache now, or even if you are still a prey to this inclining, would you not do all in your power to minimise it?"

"Indeed I would, but I must become altered myself, and I leave it to you, in whom I feel some of the grandeur of the ancient teachings against which I have rebelled, but which I secretly admire, to solve the problem of my reforming."

"You are too conscious," said the Judge, "of the discrepancy between your religion and the ruin which

you have effected to need any words of rebuke from me. After your own exposure, the speech of your advocate, and your replies to my questions, it is unnecessary for me to point out either the extent or the horror of the gambling spirit, whatever form it may take. The crime of your calling consists in the fostering of one of the worst instincts in men, resultant in a callous selfishness deserving of the strongest reproof. Those who take advantage of this tendency are bound to endure much tribulation before they find their soul. Whether they themselves are remote from the scene or not makes little difference, and just so far as they evade the obloquy of direct methods, must their penalty be increased. The man who tempts another to this thing is doing a deadly injury, which becomes worse when a woman is the subject of his scheming. That laws should be passed to make it more difficult is obvious, but it has always been held in this Court that no change takes place until volition is affected. Sin cannot be eradicated by compulsion, and until individuals learn the true object of adventure, they will never become free of this impulse, which is alone possible through its consecration.

“For yourself, I understand your lack of understanding; and the true part of you, which is the domestic side, shall by degrees permeate your being. The vulgarity of your design is tempered by love for your offspring, who were its object; and, when I consider the example of those among whom your lot was cast and who ought to have known better, my decision is disarmed of vindictiveness. Your sympathy has made you suffer already

on this count, but this is nothing to the tortures you will have to endure. You must painfully grope your way back to the religion which you secretly love and which ideally insists that each should have a trade and that none should give their money on usury or take reward against the innocent. When this truth has become your own, you will regret the course you took through your blindness, and you will value no gold save that which you have acquired through the sweat of your brow, though you will glory in sharing it with the hungry, never turning your face from any poor man. Till then you must needs be unhappy, but I cannot relieve you of your burden, nor would I if I could, since such a purgatory affords the only source of subsequent peace.

“When you have learned this you will become a champion of your own creed, but you will find that all, except a minority, will refuse to listen to you and will, as now, insult the faith which you shall adopt in its original intention. I dismiss you, full of love on your behalf, and assured that I am outlining for you the only course which can ever bring you rest. The result shall be a single person. You shall never again tempt another, but shall gamble away your best in following the footsteps of the Noblest of your race, who staked Himself to win the world. When you deserve it, you shall be known by your old name as a restorer instead of destroyer of ancient landmarks among the chosen people.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE PARASITE

AN INSIPID and restless person came into the Court. It would have been difficult to tell her age, which evidently had been the same for a long time, and she brought with her a monotony that was abroad before she opened her lips. She was passably well dressed, and among her ornaments might be noticed a cross dangling harmlessly on a chain. She had attended so many meetings that the present one hardly affected her, though she anticipated something out of the common, as hitherto she had evaded anything in the nature of a collision with truth. Not that she was not pleasant and more than ordinarily refined, but she gave the impression of being faded and of having sampled all the sensations without having dared to feel one of them.

She was in a hurry to get to the next meeting, though where it was she did not exactly know, but she was sure it was somewhere, and that among the speakers were one or two who were bound to be original. This very busy woman was nothing if not eccentric, as she lived in a society dependent on drugs labelled "delightful and not in the least dangerous." She played with what she called

her reticule, then gazed round to see if any one was looking, and wondered when the others would arrive. But when she found she had come to a stock-taking altogether different from the sales she haunted, she didn't like it a bit, and would have had an attack of hysteria, but there was no one to carry her out. She took refuge in studying snippets, of which she seemed to have an inexhaustible supply, and a smile passed over her face as she came across one more than usually chic or unorthodox.

The affair was rapidly growing uncanny, till she made up her mind that she was going to assist at a séance, and that some of "those dear spooks" would soon appear. The most exacting critic would have been moved by a condition so defenceless, so prevalent, and so eloquent of uselessness. At last she looked up and, when she saw the Judge, was terrified, for his face suggested to her One of Whom she had chattered for years, but Whom she knew less than did His enemies. If she had had time, she would have got an introduction from some of her innumerable friends who were intimate with him, but the horror of the situation was that she was totally on her own, and was being driven to some decision, which was truly dreadful. Added to this, she was impelled to take the initiative, a most indelicate proceeding, as previously she had never got further than making one of an audience and writing countless letters about what had occurred.

"I feel so shy," she began, "and I didn't at all like coming here alone, but my maid was not ready, so I had

to take the plunge, and here I am. Not that I am actually shy, for I can cackle to my heart's content if there is any scandal going on, or about things that do not really count, but I am beginning to be most uncomfortable, and if it goes on much longer like this, I know that I shall faint. I can't precisely make out what I have to tell you, but if you will kindly correct me when I am wrong, I will try to recite a sort of diary of my life, that is to say, if it won't worry you. I should be so much happier if I were talking to our Vicar, who is also my director. He thoroughly understands me, and for the last twenty years I have discussed all manner of interesting questions with him during a whole hour once a week, but I never kept him longer than that, because he was such a busy man.

"He had to do with dreadful things and used to tell me stories sometimes that made my flesh creep, which was delightful. I wonder whether you have ever been to his church, but I cannot recall your face there. You would like it immensely. I never missed a chance when he was present, though I invariably slipped out when he wasn't preaching. I felt so anxious when he had a bad cold, and at the end of Lent he was so white and drawn that he looked like a piece of paper with an aureole round it, but he said the most beautiful things, though I am afraid I can't remember any.

"Some of the curates were charming, and I cannot think what I should have done without my church, which filled up nearly all my time, though, as I grew wiser, I took it more broadly and did not allow it to interfere

with my plans. The dear Vicar often professed to be a little shocked, but I playfully called it my evolution and, as I was a generous supporter, he suffered me gladly — not that I was by any means a fool. The clergy were rather fond of me, and I had hoped that one day — but I won't go into that, as it did not come off, and there is a blank here in my diary, marked by tears shed in secret, but at the moment telling of real distress.

“As for the remainder of my time which I could spare from my beloved church, I found all sorts of interests to occupy it. I delighted in the newspapers, through which I got to know nearly every one, without knowing anything whatever about them. Of course the shops made a considerable demand, and, being strictly economical, though comfortably rich, I spent hours in buying trifles which I often returned to be changed, as they didn't suit. Then, oh, then, I lived in a delicious turmoil of modern unbelief, patronised by striking people of a type you meet nowhere else, who could not possibly have told you their creed, though we all of us loved adventures, provided the seats were not more than a shilling. I wonder if you have heard about these new movements and about what is going to happen, and every kind of sensation, which made me feel quite giddy and left me with a sense that the world was such an interesting place, with barely a moment to turn round; though I think the Vicar would hardly have liked it if I had told him all the places I went to.

“The theatres, too, were charming, and I scarcely ever missed a piece which was in the least doubtful; it made

me so very sorry for those poor dears who must often be tempted beyond endurance. I can't make out why no one tempts me, and I find I can walk about alone in perfect safety, but the Vicar says this is because I was so well brought up. I remember how wonderful he was one day about the panoply of innocence, which I put down in my special book where I kept my titbits, but of course it was carefully locked up, as it would have been extremely awkward if it had ever been discovered. In fact, I arranged in my will that it should be cremated with me, since such outpourings of my inmost being were too sacred even for the Vicar to read.

“As for my family, and my people, I saw very little of them, but, then, I was too busy. I made a rule of remembering them at Christmas and I met then at funerals and weddings, so that I was by no means a stranger to them, while it is impossible to keep up with those who are not equally clever or intent on hearing all the novelties. And now I think I have said everything, though I should like to add that the Vicar ——” (Here the Judge interposed that he thought the Vicar might look after himself, but the lady cheerily continued.) “I was only about to say that it all seems very beautiful, though I do wish he was not quite so narrow, but, you see, he is not psychical; yet, as I once told him, the only thing worth living for is one's affinity. If you could tell me where to find him, I should be so much obliged, after which I hope to go on chasing several more throughout eternity, so that it grows more and more interesting, though I am not quite certain where I have got to now.”

At last the Judge, with a courtesy that never failed him, even under pressure of this kind, informed the accused that she had best allow her advocate to continue her cause, which she was not improving by her garrulity. The advocate made a great effort to look serious, as he found no little difficulty in realising the issues involved, but he faced the folly of it and, without further delay, addressed the Judge.

“I am here, my Lord, not only as counsel for the Parasite, but as an intimate friend. I had almost said too intimate for my liking, since I could rarely impress her with the reality of anything. This fault, however, furnishes a plea for mercy, as I have gradually become convinced that her brain must be at fault and that she has suffered from many disadvantages. The very piety to which she has alluded soon became a disease, nor had she the smallest notion that she was using the sanctuary itself for a nursery in which she played with every toy she could lay her hands on. The fact is she never ceased to be childish, though she was never childlike.

“I would not insist on this aspect of the subject did I not largely trace it to the teaching which she received, and to the unfortunate patience of those in whom at first she placed implicit confidence. It is regrettable that they were content to allow her to remain in the realm of theory rather than risk the loss of her presence and patronage by the slightest challenge to action. I feel deeply moved by the thought of masses in a similar condition, and beg respectfully to express my opinion that better these sacred places should be empty than that they

should supply a harbour of refuge for a self-indulgent crowd, which becomes a glaring stumbling-block to the strong and to the sincere. Your Lordship will agree that they are probably more productive of agnosticism, or, at least, absence from public worship than more serious difficulties.

“Nevertheless, it is my duty to point out that much good was mingled with her sloth and stupidity, though I often did my best to warn her privately against a sensationalism which became a necessity. It was impossible but that, incidentally, the spirit of goodness should filter into her character; although I am willing to allow that it was of a watery nature, I contend that otherwise she might not have advanced even to the point she has now reached. I am deeply sorry, my Lord, to make these admissions, but I stand aghast at the twofold power of convention and superstition when they make a combined attack on the same soul. You will not be too severe in your judgment towards these victims who are so constituted that, if their idol for the time being asserted that black was white, they would heartily agree, and regard the speaker in the light of an oracle.

“As to the remaining aspect of the case, I own that I have a bad one, but I would lay stress on the avoidance of effort characteristic of her age, the more so in the case of the rather rich who can afford to be continually on the move. It must be difficult for a real person like yourself to measure such futility, or the advantage taken of unemployed brains on almost every plane. Myriads like this poor lady, who, had they been favoured by ad-

versity, would have left a different record, are blind to the fact that they are being slowly reduced to a state of hopeless imbecility with which you must find it hard to deal.

“Of one thing I would assure you — namely, that the Parasite was entirely ignorant of the burden she became. She would have been startled to be told, whether in the case of the clergy, or the shop assistants, or the various purveyors of mild excitement whose company she frequented, that she was regarded as an unmitigated nuisance, whereas she honestly thought she was painfully climbing a ladder which eventually reached the skies. I have nothing to add save that I am grateful that the issue no longer remains doubtful, nor have I any fears but that, out of this utter lack of purpose, your Lordship will point the way towards true steadfastness.”

The Judge was disconcerted, and the impotence of Heaven to cope with folly forced itself on his mind. Yet he still evinced that optimism which is the infallible sign of a true passion for souls, and of faith in their ultimate triumph.

“I would like to ask you,” he said, addressing the accused with a gravity beyond her deserts, “was this religion of yours at any time very much to you? Did it count for a great deal, or did it merely serve as a pastime?”

“It was far more than the last, though I can’t say it was exactly the first, but, to tell the truth, I don’t know if I thought much about it.”

"What was it then which caused you so continually to frequent your church, and how could you listen to this plethora of sermons without being influenced by them?"

"I suppose it became a habit, as good as any other and better than many, but I expect that I went on most days because I had been the day before."

"What account would you give of your library of devotion and the complicated system of rules to which you were such a slave?"

"They didn't bother me much, but I was rather unoccupied, and they served a purpose in feeding my voracious appetite for mystery."

"Was it long before you wearied of it?"

"Not very, but I actually stayed on several years after that."

"From what motive?"

"Partly from custom and partly from a sense of loyalty, as though I owed it to the place, but, quite in the early days, it ceased to inspire me and became more or less of a drudgery."

"Did it strike you that you might make it difficult for your teachers, or bring contempt, so far as a single individual can, on what should be the most inspiring institution in any country?"

"I was brought up to regard the priesthood as immaculate, and designed to supply an opportunity of romance with rectitude, which was my pet weakness."

"Did it not appear to you unfair to set them on a pinnacle which they had no desire to occupy, and from

which, if they fell, they became a subject for unmeasured scorn?"

"They were the only people who were thoroughly safe, and I could not live without sentiment of some kind, or I should have had nothing to dream about when I was alone."

Here a cloud passed over the Judge's face, telling of his sympathy with men specially dear to him whose task, if it was to prove worthy of itself, was nothing less than superhuman. He sighed as he thought of the stupidity that caused the best of them a severer trial than a martyr's death, which they would have met without flinching. He concluded that it was wiser to make no further reference to a subject beyond the Parasite's appreciation.

"Were you interested in great names, in the needs of the sisterhood, or in the calls to sacrifice and service which you must often have heard?"

"You see I was a great thinker; I loved reading, and saw things from so many sides that I could never have committed myself to any specific course of conduct."

"Were you never troubled by the nightmare of idleness, or by fears lest you should have played with these various movements to the ruin of your soul?"

"I had a wonderful gift of balance which I always preserved, and I was trained to consider nothing such bad form as to let yourself go. I can't tell you, though, how greatly I admired the explorers who opened up new ground, which usually ended in a series of *culs de*

sac where they completely lost themselves, but I thoroughly enjoyed watching them make the attempt."

"And your heart? Did you really love, really feel, really give, really weep, really pray, really risk, really work, really *anything?*"

"I was perfectly calm, and careful to observe the convenances of society. Besides, I made it a rule to allow nothing to interfere with my night's repose."

"Did it come home to you that the Church was universal, that the women in the shops were your sisters, that the people at the theatres were immortal, and that you owed a debt to them all which remained unpaid?"

"I hardly know what you mean, for I was never in debt in my life, and was particular about my investments to the last penny."

"Were you frightened about dying? Did you wonder what would happen afterwards, and whether, in some strange way, your present was making your future?"

"I thought it would be horrid to die and hoped I might go off in my sleep, but was not over-anxious so long as I could send for the clergy in time, though I hated pain and am thankful to say I hardly ever had even headaches."

The Judge was almost despondent, but here he seemed to touch the highest point of chivalry and, in his summing up, by showing exceptional dignity, transferred it to one ignorant of its first elements. He was painfully conscious that the Parasite represented a prolific type among the leisured women of any country, and he groaned within himself as he approached a cemetery

containing, from his point of view, numberless moribund, if not already dead. He was thinking of a multitude made up of those for whom there was no place either in heaven or hell, and throughout his judgment he showed divine forbearance, as dealing with the worst of disasters.

“Having listened to the outline of your days,” he said, in tones which even the accused could not mistake, “I feel it my duty to set before you, in no measured terms, the awfulness of sin, or of missing the mark. I should find it easier to offer you consolation if you had had the courage to commit literally the wrong in the spirit of which you revelled. I wish you to understand that, in contributing to the general ignorance, and still more in treating the most serious issues with levity, you have helped to sap the foundations of a faith whose strength will always be regulated by the reality of its adherents.

“It would be well to remember that the absence of aim by which you have excused your vagaries obtains for the majority of mortals, outside the class who earn their daily bread, while it points to opportunities on the part of the former towards the latter which, to your great loss, you neglected. Your refusal to be implicated in any of the vital questions affecting your sisters, in which your money, at any rate, might have proved useful, displays a selfishness more culpable, in my judgment, than many of the scandals by which you professed to be shocked, though the recounting of them was your chief delight. If they who are striving to raise woman

to a higher state of efficiency and to a realisation of her vocation, as well as of her rights, find difficulty in their task, you and those who follow in your train increase it a thousandfold. It is through the example of such as yourself that men, who adore the memory of their mother, deal out an unwarranted contempt to her sex, which the best of them invariably respect till it proves unworthy.

“You appear to have forgotten that the Church, which was so often on your lips, includes the girl behind the counter, the tired sempstress, and the object from whom you drew your skirts, but which happens to have been made in the Divine image. The mental nipping, which was your besetment, proves the ruin of thousands, nor is the habit palliated by the greater guilt of those who make their livelihood on false pretences. The rôle of woman, if it is to be an ideal one, must be lived up to, and involves, equally with that of man, the dignity of work, in whatever department. Some day it will strike you that the sex question is not enough to occupy the soul, let alone the thoughts, of one whose eyes have been opened to the world’s pain, and to complicated problems which only a woman’s wit and consummate patience can solve. The hurt which you have effected is that you have treated tragedies as trifles, but, mercifully, it is a phase which will pass. When you have been sufficiently tried in the fire, and when it shall have done its work in cleansing the filth of your spiritual things, you shall approach those qualities and ideals which have never failed to excite your admiration.

"Your destiny must for the future depend on your own concurrence, but, at least, your environment shall be such as to prevent your lapsing by reason of its ease. With all the sorrow I feel at the chances which are gone by, I can do little or nothing for you. When instead of talking about religion without acting you act it without talking, your pious custom shall stand you in good stead, and you shall grasp the meaning of those visions which were your snare. Later, you shall arrive at the solution of love itself, which is more than dalliance, but which carries with it the cross you so lightly wear. From now you need have no fears. Your true life is just beginning, and, though it may mean much chastisement ere you come to its perfecting, you shall some day discover for yourself Him Who, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, you care for best of all. You shall then find your affinity."

CHAPTER XIV

MEPHISTO

THIS prisoner was the reverse of attractive. No one could deny that he was well-looking, but his whole bearing was for some reason repellent. He overdid the art of pleasing, strongly reminding one of the type which is "ready to supply the next article." Though his name was on many lips, the sight of an ordinary and vulgar man was disappointing. Yet this was a person who had acquired celebrity as a middle-class Don Juan and whose conquests were a matter of common talk. He was evidently outside the meaning of the Court and a stranger to judgment in any shape. He was too bovine for the barest suspicion of sorrow, and, having run his business with none to say him nay, he took his seat with an assurance beyond belief. His unconsciousness of wrong was a trait which it was difficult to grasp, and the conviction came that God's harshest treatment of a man is to let him alone. With a dramatic gesture suggestive of the profession itself, the accused, who symbolised a tyrannous power in the world of entertainment, thus addressed the Judge:

"It is hard to understand to what I owe the honour of this interview, and, had I not felt mesmerised into

coming, I should have avoided such a dreary spectacle. The fact is that all my habits have tended towards gaiety, until I can stand nothing without a swing, or to the music of which you are not forced to trip it as you go. Upon my word, I cannot see what all this points to, since I am a perfectly harmless individual who has given any number of people a good time. I have supplied an easy means of oblivion, have done my best to destroy the pangs of conscience, and have expelled the smallest fear of future punishment. I look upon it as altogether to the good to have banished hell, and supplied to the theatre a lighter side much needed in the country where I lived.

“I can hardly say that acting, in the serious sense of the word, came in at all; what I aimed at was laughter, without any awkward restrictions of decency or manners. They tell me, though I have ceased to notice it, that what mainly filled the house and my own purse was a combination of lust and vitality so entrancing that the time passed before you knew where you were, without any tax on your intellect. The after consequences were not my affair, but the drug which I provided effectually dulled remorse; there was a sort of ‘let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,’ about it which acted as an anodyne and made the same people come again and again, as though they could never have enough. It was all in the way of pleasure, and I flatter myself that I raised the art of turning heads with no brains in them to a new science. I found myself patronised not only by the middle classes, but by the highest in the land, so far as names go, until

I became the resort of any who wanted to forget their worries to tunes and dances unsurpassed in their seductiveness. The truth is I drew the line nowhere, save of course at the limitation of the censor, and even that I learned to evade by skilled innuendo.

“As to the performers, I had no difficulty in securing them, seeing that my requirements were chiefly confined to beauty of form, of which there was a large supply in the market. I confess it never dawned on me that they had souls, or that they might look back with regret to having sacrificed their youth, and, in many instances, their innocence, to the success of my schemes. However, the business part of my programme was so strong that my pupils soon became adepts at decoying their own prey, more by promises than by performance, until it was secured beyond escape. Their engagement was preceded by private interviews with myself which I would prefer not to describe too accurately, but, at any rate, they knew fairly well the character of their contract, and the majority subscribed willingly to the conditions of their employment. Now and again those who looked upon the drama as of national importance appeared to be vexed at my operations, but by degrees I became accepted, and even taken up by some of the leaders, lest they should seem to be behind the growing trend of public opinion in a downward direction.

“I doubt whether I have any excuse to offer, nor do I feel the need of one. Having a keen eye to business, which was my main characteristic, I saw that there was a large fortune in the delights of the flesh, if properly

graduated, as also in playing down to the dislike of study and hatred of thought which were features of my age. Anyway I am told that I have countless friends and not a single enemy, which leaves me in an excellent humour, and hopeful that you will treat this little matter without prejudice, and as a man of the world."

The advocate was fairly nonplussed, and seemed likely to retire from the case. In fact he hardly knew the accused, who had generally given him the slip, being inclined to shirk the least approach to self-examination. Even here were present that gleam of kindness and attempt to make the best of things which often ennable the counsel for the defence in any Court. He also recognised that though the prisoner had soiled, by diverting to his own purposes, the whole area of comedy, love-making, music, and the dance, there was no intrinsic harm in any of these things. Being himself pure, they took on for him his own guilelessness, nor did he need any one to tell him that youth was youth, that the laws of attraction might and ought to be without sin, and that children dance to an organ as by nature born. It was the defilement of these instincts that wounded him, and, as he contemplated this perverter of possible good, he wondered how it was that such forces had been yielded up with scarcely a struggle on the part of true lovers of humanity.

"I fear," he said, "that the arguments which I have to put before your Lordship are too vague to help the prisoner's case, but I would point out that the particular course he adopted was fostered, if not brought about, by

the deadly dulness which prevailed where he resided. Goodness wore an aspect which, to say the least, was trying, and afforded him no small opportunity. Aware as I am of the strong point which you make of personal responsibility, I cannot forbear the suggestion that in countries where the climate runs to gloom nations are more easily tempted to license than where the sky is blue and there is a sparkle in the air. It is possible, my Lord, for virtue to become a weight; and, when the intelligence is of a poor quality, combined with the melancholy which treads hard on vacuousness of mind, no wonder if, with a little arrangement, pockets are emptied in order to satisfy the lower inclinations.

“Even I, who am conducting this case, am unable to trace any good in the prisoner’s occupation, except that it may have served for a harmless distraction to a large and eminently respectable class who possessed neither wit nor imagination enough to be much affected either way. I would go so far as to say that many of this type were even benefited, since without similar relief they would have become morose and unbearable in their uninteresting homes. I trust, then, that your Lordship will be lenient to the accused, at least as regards that portion of the house which was condemned to a drab and colourless existence. That my client is bound to undergo some drastic treatment I cannot disguise from myself, but I hope the day may arrive when he will have acquired a truer knowledge of that bonhomie for which there is a place in the scheme of salvation.”

The Judge was plainly troubled, and there was a dis-

tance between himself and the accused which happily was not the rule. The story was woefully sordid, yet, withal, explicable to one who understood the weight of life and the heaviness with which it pressed upon the children of men. His mind was travelling beyond the prisoner, who failed to interest him compared with the crowds whom that prisoner had tempted, and the causes which rendered them so susceptible to his lures. His sympathy called up a picture of the ignorant rich, and from his heart he pitied the young men whose prime necessity was to be amused. He felt the tragedy of their stupidity and bewailed the snares hidden for them under exotics and every enticement.

As he measured the extent of the mischief, there passed before him a vision of future mothers ruined by suggestion and rendered unable to accomplish their self-development. It appeared to him more pernicious than actual vice, involving as it did less dread, and promising a slumber from which the sleeper woke to find his or her true dignity for ever done away. He saw the ruin of the most hopeful, and the result of hybrid unions which transmitted the poison to succeeding generations. On that kindest of faces came a look of compassion for the world, but with regard to the accused himself, his pity made him the more pitiless. The following conversation passed between him and the prisoner:

“I wish to know if you thought of these traps which you laid for your audience as affecting your own sister or daughter, or if the memory of your mother once crossed your mind?”

“I have always regarded women as more or less fair game and, with the exception of my mother, looked on them as inferior to man and put into the world for his passing satisfaction.”

“Did you not feel any misgivings as to your personal treatment of your performers, being aware of the straits to which they were reduced, when you promised them extravagant gains at the expense of their honour?”

“I soon lost any previous pity, though where my fancies were touched I kept them to myself, until I had no further use for them; but I paid them well, and their own people did not seem to mind.”

“Were you not inclined to shed a tear over the young men whose mothers’ hearts you broke and whose sisters you shamed, knowing, as you must have known, that you were to them as the spider to the fly, and that, if you got them into your web, there was little or no chance for them?”

“I can own to nothing but pleasure in the transaction, as it brought me into a society which flattered my ambition. Though I had a leaning for the gilded youth, there was a radical side to my nature which rather enjoyed than otherwise bringing them to my own level; besides, while the fascination lasted, it was roses, roses all the way.”

“Did it not hurt you that you were injuring the drama itself, and, under a name with fine traditions, were placing before the public productions instinct with picturesque sin?”

“I knew this and I hated it, but I did it all the same.”

“Did you consider the reach of your influence, the host of imitators, the popularity of your dances, and the deadly taint which through you affected the entire realm of amusement?”

“I took every care as to my royalties, so that I could not regret a tendency which, the more it increased, the more it strengthened the desire to patronise my show.”

“Were you never appealed to by the illness of the girls whom you employed, and whom you turned off at a moment’s notice when, physically, they ceased to draw?”

“If I had not done so, I should soon have been ruined by paying attention to sentimental fancies.”

“Surely it cannot be a fact that in several instances girls were offered engagements on the understanding that they must first forego their virtue, or you had no opening for them?”

“I fancy this sort of thing did take place sometimes, but it was all in the commission, as we say; of course they had the right to decline if they preferred poverty, while it would doubtless have happened to them in some other way, and less to their advantage.”

“You cannot mean to tell me that you felt no qualms when you held before them as a bait marriages with a class altogether removed from their own, to be compassed by stealth, without the knowledge of the man’s parents, and to the inevitable unhappiness of the young people concerned?”

“This was one of my chief allurements and, when the idea came to me, I felt that I had hit on no end of a good

thing, though as to what followed, it was a matter of complete indifference."

"Is it the case that more than once you almost repented and wished you had turned your attention to the bona fide money market, instead of to such a shameless traffic?"

"I frequently thought I would turn it up, though I have never acknowledged it till now, and once, when the doctors warned me, I remember a long procession of faces which haunted me for days."

"Are you beginning to realise what it all meant, and is there no vestige of sorrow in your heart, as you commence to see that it is possible to commit murder without using a weapon?"

"For mercy's sake, come to your sentence, and let me go! Yes, I begin to see it more clearly, and the same procession of faces, much longer now than then, is coming before me; but at the time, so help me God, I never thought it out. If I had met some one like yourself, I believe I should have chucked it and turned out a better man."

The sternness on the Judge's countenance relaxed for an instant, and the skill of a man who, without ceasing to be cold, put such pathos into his tone that this vulgarian nearly wept, excelled any eloquence. He knew the value of words, however, and, swinging round to severity out of very love, elected to help him by the remoteness which he assumed.

"Your proceedings," he said, "were too considered to call for much pity. I fully understand your advo-

cate's reference to the tedium and dulness of the daily round, but I fail to see how this qualifies your conduct. I am aware that you have often dispelled clouds and lifted burdens, but the impression you give me is that of a man who looked on the ruin of an immortal soul as a trifle compared to enriching his wretched self and to revelling in the exploitation of the senses. It is evident that offences must come, but it is a sorry business for him through whom they come, nor is there any doubt that through you they have been seriously multiplied.

"It is neither my pleasure nor my duty to dwell longer on a point to which you are at present nearly insensible, though I am grateful for the gleam of goodness which you have just shown. Your chief penalty consists, as it always must, in what you have become, nor can even this touch its maximum till you recognise what you might have been. I am acquainted with your charities, your spasmodic generosity, and your sentimental tears, but these things count little with me, amounting as they did to no more than emotionalism and vanity.

"However distasteful the lesson, you must learn the horror of the spirit of murder without the courage or the excuses often accompanying the act. You will have to endure a hideous remorse before your heart lives, when you shall begin to guess at the tragedy of your pleasant days. Your discipline shall be to undergo a long period in the wilderness, where you shall be compelled to face yourself and where there shall be no glitter, no seductions, no display. Alone, under the stars, you

shall be driven to contemplate your true home, from which you have not only wandered, but the entrance of which you have barred to thousands. You shall wake to a sadness of which no one can relieve you, as you dwell on the young lives which you destroyed at an age when they should have been defended by every good influence. You shall drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs, as your mind travels over the gins which you set to catch the birds before you plucked them for your profit. Worst of all, you shall realise, in the silence of your solitude, the deadly wrong of cheapening sin, and of investing carnality with a halo which is the triumph of a Mephistopheles. Though the knife must probe to the roots of the evil, I would bid you hope, seeing that one day your wilderness shall blossom like a rose.

“Later, you shall return as an apostle of your new-born idealism and shall witness a wantonness which obtains on a larger scale, and in the invention of which you once gloried. You shall reach a state of yearning to retrieve through which you will be redeemed, in proportion as you daringly assert that the body has a sanctity of its own, that home is a divine institution, and that innocence claims our protection. Such a sentence is the heaviest I can pronounce, but in after days you will bless me for it, and, when your lesson is learned, you shall arrive at a gaiety which is all good.

“Your powers of arranging for sane frolic shall not be lost. Your gifts of management, which were unique, shall still have a sphere. This influence of yours, which

proved such a bane, shall be consecrated to other ends, and you shall not lose your power through your new preference for purity. Hereafter you shall detest the thought of supplying danger, but without forfeiting the swing and go that are much needed in the realm of good. Your paternity shall reassert itself, and, to quote from your own Psalms, your aim shall be that the daughters of the city become polished corners of the Temple. Not for an instant would I diminish the dash or damp the joy which you know so well how to impart, but the lesson the wilderness shall have taught you is that God and gladness must go hand in hand, if the last is not to die."

CHAPTER XV

THE DRUNKARD

THE Drunkard shuffled into Court, as he shuffled everywhere, with a stupid leer telling of an addled brain and of finer feelings lost long ago. His hectic flush betokened a shame and a sensitiveness which spoke of better days. He had evidently once been careful of his appearance, and the habits of a gentleman were discernible, spite of the slackness and seediness of his whole bearing. No satire was likely to be called forth by this wreck of a former man who was his own enemy, and who might be described as a gradual suicide. He hated sitting down; the word rest was unknown to him; his hands, on which were no marks of work, clutched at his collar, smoothed his hair, stroked his cheeks, sought his pockets, and then began it all over again.

A nameless sorrow enveloped him, arousing rage in an onlooker against the purveyors of what had ruined millions like him, whilst they had been enriched and even ennobled thereby. The cause of the curse lay with the poor drunkard himself, it being clear that, if his own liability had been nil, he would not have been cited for judgment. When he looked up into the Judge's

face a new peace possessed his soul, and the swiftness of the change, unless witnessed, would have been incredible. Those hands of his ceased trembling, and he became restful under a glance which disregarded his externals. All hurt to his pride had gone, since he knew that he would be treated for what he was and not for what he seemed to be. To be honoured could alone satisfy his thirst for respect, much as the salute of a sentry might save from despair an officer who had been cashiered. Instinct suggested that the Drunkard, having been ruined by his emotions, could best be cured on the same plane, and a contest was obviously impending between natural loathing and supernatural love.

It was hardly to be believed that a human being could have come to this extremity, unless he had long ago bartered away the birthright of free will. A large element of the child still remained in the accused, and, as throughout his career he had been conspicuous for weakness, so now he was equally susceptible to the influence of goodness, which comforted him not a little. Seldom was the Judge so wonderful. He had not yet opened his lips, but one began to understand how there are presences which can expel demons without a word. If silence is golden at certain moments, only the very wise know when to refrain; but during this interval a communion was established between the Judge and the sufferer unintelligible save to those who have loved enough to make a similar effort. The man could tell his story now; and, though there was no alteration in his clothes, so great a one was there in his face, that only

his mother would have known him. Such a transformation may be deemed beyond belief, but it is the one feature in the restoration of the inebriate which prevents hopelessness and expresses the paradox of two people merged in one, till separated anew by sympathy into their constituent parts.

“I have come,” he said, “not merely to confess, but, for the first time in my life, to accuse myself. I have always sworn that I never drank to excess, that every one else lied, and that, from start to finish, I was grossly misunderstood. Simply to be with you has somehow made me happy, and, being happy, it becomes easier to own up. How I could have made such a hash of my life, reducing myself to a state worse than that of an animal, I fail to understand. When I came here I had meant to pitch the same old yarn, and to accuse everybody on God’s earth except myself. At last I see my damnable selfishness, but I pray that the name on which I brought disgrace may never come to light.

“The satire of it is that I started well, was even brilliant, and more than once had the world, so to speak, at my feet. What caused others long application came to me by inspiration, and, unfortunately, I gained honours by scarcely more than guesswork. The same ease dogged my footsteps in the years that followed, and I hardly noticed that this cleverness was landing me in a mire which I should then have regarded as outside the range of probability. Love of good fellowship, the artistic temperament, and impatience of restraint drove me to drink as a duck takes to water, more especially as I

was master of the revels, loved entertaining, and shone beyond the rest when the wine flowed. Not that I neglected my work, I was a demon at that, too, but I did not recognise that both work and wine spelt for me oblivion of myself and popularity among my inferiors. The only person who saw this was my mother, for my pals and a crowd of hangers-on liked what it meant for them too well to drop a hint for my benefit. My mother believed that a good woman would save me, but again this pernicious facility proved my bane, since I won her without any effort or any test of sacrifice. She naturally thought she would cure me, and for a time the bliss of our content promised a permanent remedy. I worked harder than ever, being fired by a new ambition, until I attained a place in regard to which I would prefer to be silent.

“But, whether it was the wife, or whether it was the place, there was more getting than giving in both. Soon enough I came up against the old trouble, which meant that everything on earth had for me a brick wall only to be scaled by getting drunk. By degrees recklessness set in. The wife whom I adored, or, rather, idolised as a reflection of myself, palled on me. Even the children became a nuisance, for I lost interest in anything save that thrill of being outside my body which was enchaining me more tightly every day. I became less particular not only as to myself but as to the liquor, provided it was wet and provided it was strong. Unfortunately, I had money without limit, which made the descent more rapid, until ruin stared me in the face. With my

self-respect my honour went; I developed into a liar of the worst description, cute as they are made, and capable of any subterfuge in order to indulge in my darling sin. Countless hands were held out to save me, but I would have none of it. Now that it is too late I know that, had I meant business, or acted loyally by the advice I received, I could have recovered and been as good a man as ever.

“My mother’s love was angelic, but my wife left me, nor do I blame her when I think of the children. I doubt if she would have deserted one of them in a similar plight. Then I grew not to care, and even I find it beneath me to reveal the vileness of the last few years. To the end I continued to dream of goodness, and lazily made resolves which I had no intention of carrying out. My constitution refused to be broken, and my strength increased my weakness. Could I have had a long illness, there might have been a pause, but, getting over my bouts with no serious damage to my health, I fled once more from the voice of conscience to taste what was both my delight and my destruction.

“Language fails me to describe the ceaseless worry I caused, the tyranny I exercised, the people I wore out, and the gloom I created by my false gaiety. I stand here not so much with a desire to become sober, as with a passion for punishment which is the only antidote strong enough for my disease, affording as it does the pleasure of pain, mercifully a closed book to nearly all save the drunkard.”

The advocate was great on this occasion, and without

hesitation he began his speech, his difficulty being to compress it. "I rejoice, my Lord," he said, "to plead not only for the man but for my friend. I have never ceased to love him, nor he me, and at the risk of its sounding like a fairy story, I am bold to describe him as a poet imprisoned within a beast, with which he became blended, but to which he by no means belonged. He was by nature one of the sweetest, gentlest characters I have ever known. As a child, his chief delight was in prayer and in vague wonder as to the infinitude of God and the mystery of the Universe. When a small boy he was always doing kind things, and I can see him now as he put his arms round the dogs and kissed them, while his favourite cob seemed to him to have a soul. There was no sign of coming doom in this universal favourite as after dinner his father treated him to champagne, showed him off to his guests, and prophesied of his future.

"He has told his story almost too well, but your Lordship needs no warning from me that these intervals of ingenuousness are often a prelude to still greater deception. As for his final ruin, he was heavily handicapped by his early victories, and he doubtless found it true that, when to drink is added wealth, it needs a mighty miracle to enter the Kingdom. His life afforded few restraints and he would have had to make them for himself, which is just what he was unable to do. The error of supposing that the end of existence was to *be* happy, instead of to *make* happy, was the initial cause of his collapse. That a man should kill the thing he

loves, torture his special treasure, crucify the object of his worship, and hold up to derision the country to which he longs to add fresh laurels by his achievements, astounds his advocate and makes him dumb.

“When I picture this potential leader of men slinking into the lowest haunts, trading on his best friends, raising their hopes only to dash them to the ground, and ending in a mass of egoism which was the pest of those who most pitied him, I ask your mercy not alone for the drunkard, but for those who found it possible to supply the instruments of his martyrdom. I should have been glad to think that of these the accused has not said one word, if his leniency had not been due to the fact that, even now, he does not hate what landed him in Hades. His hospitality knew no bounds, though it was spoilt by the vanity that accompanied it, but he never turned his back on a convict, which should claim your consideration now that he himself is one. I have nothing more to add, and prefer to leave the solution of this tragedy to your Lordship, having marked the danger of human inclinations where, in face of every cause for revulsion, the devil takes on some irresistible charm.”

The face of the Judge indicated a grief equal to that of the prisoner. Throughout the confession and the speech which followed he was intensely moved by the thought of the snare to which many of the brightest and brainiest were subject. He was bewailing in secret these flowers of promise that had opened with exceptional glory, but had faded long ere they arrived at maturity. With a compassion known in perfection only

by a man of sorrows, he cordially pitied those of the race who were capable of worse than killing their brothers for coin of the realm. It was no excuse in his sight that they might bring forward the plea of fair dealing, or argue that others would have done it if they had not, or, deadliest of all, that their intention was to use a proportion of their receipts for patriotic (!) ends. Brushing this aside, as he gazed on the bankrupt before him, tears flowed down his cheeks. It was so unnecessary, so disappointing, so wasteful, so wicked, though he did not delude himself that alcohol was the solitary channel of this traffic in man's proneness to err. Nevertheless the hardheartedness of the transaction shocked him, and the crime of thus mutilating for money the Divine image in those who could not resist, staggered him more than the tale of woe to which he had just listened. When this dastardly deed became incorporated with good and when those implicated, whether directly or indirectly, went so far as to pray for the victims of their cupidity, the Judge shuddered at the awakening which must come to any capable of such self-delusion. He turned to this one with surprising gentleness and paid him extra honour to cover the loss of his own.

“Tell me,” he said “how it was that in your youth you became familiar with the cause of your future downfall.”

“My father was a hospitable man and prided himself on the best of cellars.”

“Was your trouble hereditary?”

“I did not dare to let myself think so, though I had

heard of wild enough stories in the family, but we regarded them as rather heroic, and not a word was said to make us feel ashamed."

"And your mother's attitude?"

"My mother was a saint."

"Did you feel no remorse, while you were still young, when you became aware that this was growing on you?"

"Not a bit, which puzzles me. At the time my companions called it pluck, said I was a sportsman, egged me on, but took care not to follow so far."

"Did you love your work?"

"Passionately, but it was exhausting, until to do the best I had to resort to stimulants in increasing quantities."

"With what result?"

"That I felt like a demi-god and that there was nothing I could not perform if put to it."

"Your brain?"

"I had visions of every kind of delight, fairies visited me, but live women became insipid, and nothing satisfied me short of communing with the unreal."

"Did you escape tedium and was monotony banished?"

"Yes, and this was best of all, for I lived in a world of fantasy, above ordinary concerns, though at intervals I came down with a run and found myself common clay."

"How do you explain that, knowing what you were doing, you continued to do it?"

"I can't, but I did both."

"What of your manliness?"

"I never boasted of it more than when it was in danger."

"What of your affections?"

"I specially wept about them when I was as hard as a stone."

"What about truth?"

"I swore by all the gods when I was planning the worst treachery."

"Your fame, what of that?"

"I disregarded it compared to the glories I could conjure up by a dram."

"And your country, of which at one time you were such an ornament?"

"Never was I so patriotic as in my cups, and no one could wave a flag better than I when I tarnished it most."

"Did you have many reactions?"

"Yes, indeed, and many of them were quite long ones."

"Could you work between whiles?"

"Not well, and each time I had less zest and grew more quickly tired."

"Did money play a part in the business?"

"Yes, but not for myself. I cared for it only that I might add to the national prestige, though God knows how such a combination could be effected."

"Did you get it honestly?"

"At first, yes; later, no. The more callous I became, and the less scrupulous, the more I won, till everything I touched turned to gold, while all the time I was privately a villain."

"How could you manage this without detection?"

"A drunkard can manage anything till the final catastrophe."

"How did this come?"

"I would rather not say. I just disappeared."

"Is your name cursed?"

"On the contrary, I am quoted as a benefactor by the public, though a few, here and there, are in the secret."

"And your inner being?"

"Must I say?"

"Every word spoken here is voluntary."

"Well, then, my true being was entirely another one, and throughout the piece I was longing, longing, longing for the best, and admired it, too. If at any moment I had been wakened up and asked my dearest wish, it would have been to see God. When alone, I devoured every book bearing on heroism and self-sacrifice, and when I was not lost in drink, I would lose myself in stories of the saints. In my darkest times I used to kiss my crucifix and talk to the hanging Figure. Again and again I pledged myself, bar rot, to walk in His footsteps if only I could do so in some forcible fashion; so I prayed and I drank, and I drank and I prayed, till I became a horrid jumble, though retaining a method in my madness and keeping an eye to the main chance."

"What of the company you kept and the dens of iniquity you visited?"

"No one knew me there."

"Did you pity the poor?"

"Yes, by heaven! I did, for I knew their trials and, whatever I may have to bear, I ask you, whose kindness

has disarmed me, to show them still more, seeing that it is only natural so many of them should go under."

"And if you returned, what would you do?"

"I know myself too well to think I should do otherwise, but at the moment I don't wish to go back, and, if, in some way beyond my power to divine, you can make me only decent and help me to paint out the past, I will undergo my bit and bless you."

The conversation had been painful to both speakers alike and, as the Judge prepared to give his decision, the fact that a good man may be made sin, yet knowing it not, rendered Gethsemane intelligible. "I have listened to your words with deep concern, but I am well aware that you cannot change your own spots and that the picture you have drawn has been replete with yourself. That you have suffered as few mortals are called on to do I readily admit, but I would gravely remind you of the cruelty you have shown, which, in the case of the drunkard, as of the harlot, is allowed to pass far too easily. To an extent I admire your absence of complaining, but I would impress on you that, outside your physical weakness which has become a disease, vanity coupled with sensation was the true cause of your disaster. From a child you were spoilt, which is the root of the matter. That you could have been anything you liked you need no telling, and your religious zeal, which amounted to a frenzy, was a spurious scaling of the stars.

"Get it ingrained into your mind that drink, even with you, was comparatively incidental, and that at the

back of it was this playing to the gallery which found its expression in your magnificent schemes, your grandiloquent talk, and later in the tap-room! This was the impetus which was driving you to the streets, making you an alien to your own, and causing you to affect the lowest company, provided you could king it among minnows. Self was your master, and liquor was the whip with which it lashed you, till you cringed before the tyrant and obeyed his lightest behests. This was what made people shun your presence and almost pray for your death. But you continued, until you ended by not caring a jot if you could indulge in the zest of dominion for ten minutes.

“No metaphor can better account for your present condition than that of one who, in the early stages, was fascinated by flying so long as the aerodrome was filled with crowds. The sensation of the flight was at first secondary to the plaudits of the throng, and unconscious how enslaved he was becoming, he woke to find that no day counted unless he went up. So strong became its hold, that he was eternally whirled through space, nor could he descend for a rest but he must mount again and be driven through the clouds. The only comfort remaining was that he never wholly lost the clapping hands of those who tempted him to further trials, but jeered him when he fell. They even dared him to greater rashness, offering him rewards in order to share the thrill as they held their breath, and waited for the thud upon the ground. You have lived at the top of your bent, and your penalty must be equivalent. You must

acquire the counter secret of sobriety and self-extinction; in a word, you must give up flying and you must walk for many a long day.

“The penance which I inflict on you is that you shall count for nothing and, when you open your mouth, you shall have no hearing. You shall know the anguish of an impotent enthusiast, and you shall painfully learn that the only way to better the world is to bleed for it. You shall discover by daily contact with inebriates the trial which you proved to those about you. You shall have to listen to their endless talk concerning themselves, and you shall be shut up with those who in their own eyes are the hub of the universe. Sickened by the sight of it in others, self shall gradually die, and it shall be revealed to you what you have lost in your contempt of woman’s love, when, being unable to forget your own image, caring was impossible. You shall discover, through the ordinary medium of home life, the value of decency and sobriety. You shall find it unnecessary to indulge in talk about the infinite as you patiently strive to bring happiness to your own circle. You shall cease to pose when you have learned the meaning of altruism. This will no longer consist of fits and starts, or brilliant endeavours to do great things which shall be spoken of, but in the trivial round, which will give you ample opportunity of denying yourself and finding God. You will be chary of revelling in religion, which you can now see counted for hardly more than another, and the most vivid sensation.

“All in good time the degradation of the drunkard will

disappear, and in his place shall be a modest, unassuming man, who shall seldom speak, even of his repentance, but shall be more than satisfied if he does his job. When you have been long enough in your village, you shall be used for the high purposes for which you were destined by your gifts before you allowed them to become bizarre. You shall find in the cross which you have to bear a joy you never fancied in your wildest flights. You shall live to bless your own experience, if by the plain relation of it, to your confusion, you liberate a single brother from the prison of which your knowledge shall have furnished the key. When you save your first soul, you shall be happy. No longer shall it be necessary for you to deal in heroics and to rant about heaven. You shall be there already."

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. GRUNDY

A COMBINATION of the most correct and poisonous types made her entrance, without the smallest perturbation at a situation which eluded her. The first impression she produced was that she could not hurt a fly, the second that she could strangle a child without its affecting her precision or her smile, arranged on a recognised pattern. The absence of the emblems of justice surprised her, causing her to despise the "person," as she would have called him, who sat below the place where they ought to have been. Her dress, though severe, was à la mode, her chief effort being to offer no temptation to the other sex, an attempt in which she was singularly successful. A comparison between her and the Judge was full of interest, and no one but would have preferred to fall into the hands of the latter, rather than into those of the pitiless lady who had at last come up to receive as good as she had meted out, not so much to the guilty, as to the discovered.

There was an element of tragedy in this struggle between formality and frankness, but it escaped the female Pharisee, whose self-possession was superb. Fortunately for her, she did not suffer from nerves, and her anxiety

was not as to her position, which she regarded as unassailable, but merely to do the right thing whatever happened. Even she had perforce to be honest, and, though confession was impossible to her, she commenced in a hard and unfeeling voice to make a statement of facts without prejudice, and without the faintest hint that she could have been worthy of blame.

“I cannot imagine why I have been summoned to this place, or, if so, why I have not been invited to sit on the bench where a seat is reserved for me in *causes célèbres* next to the President, whom I often prompt when he is in difficulty as to his decision. From my infancy I have been brought up to keep the world in order, to prevent the disaster of being natural, to crown success with laurels, to tread the fallen under foot, and to have no pity on deviations from virtue, save in the case of the very great, or in phases of society where, being good style, they become a cause for praise. On matters of dress or of etiquette I am the ultimate court of appeal, nor am I influenced by the outrageousness of fashion if appearances are observed. What happens behind closed doors is not my affair, but in polite circles, so far as externals go, I reign supreme. I have no use for the open moor, the blue sky, or the caravan, though of late I have been studying how to invade even these and spoil them by my presence. Whether I shall succeed I cannot say, but I expect that, all in good time, the world will be under my sway, except the Arctic regions, which are already so cold that they hardly need my freezing touch.

"I have been a great traveller in my day, and have found myself equally at home at Court and in the suburbs, where I have often met with a warm reception, but in the slums they have treated me with a grave lack of courtesy and have even pelted me with ancient eggs and other missiles, obliging me to beat a hasty retreat. The East, the cradle of truth, is no favourite haunt of mine, for I regard basking in the sun as incompatible with an approved demeanour. I have always advocated marriages on a fiscal basis, and have opened offices in most large cities, where I have done a smart business; but in the villages I was expelled by a dangerous woman called Dame Nature, with whom I have nothing in common. I wish to state that I am extremely religious, while believing in nothing, but there are few churches and chapels which I do not frequent, regulating my attendance by the popularity of the preacher, the gorgeousness of the vestments, or the spiciness of the teaching. I am by no means in favour of domestic effusiveness, though I was great on family prayers when they were the vogue, but, at the present moment, I am doubtful on the latter point, as they would seem to be on the decline.

"The young for some reason rather dislike me and even call me prim, but I can afford to be patient, as I feel confident that, sooner or later, they will change their tone towards me through the bribes which I keep in store for them, but which they cannot appreciate in their early years. I had a better chance in girls' schools, but regret to say that these are now revolting, so that

it would seem prudent to make my escape before I am turned out. On the whole, I am distinctly depressed, owing to a new doctrine of joy which is setting in, and that dreadful woman whom I mentioned is trespassing on my preserves, which terrifies me. Still I am glad to think that I have withered many smiles, spoilt many romances, brought about much despair, and broken on the wheel many an apostle of liberty.

“I know how to keep my place; and, if I am to be dreaded by ordinary people, I fawn before those in high places, allowing them privileges and sensations which I repudiate in the case of the common herd. I have immense reverence for blue blood, though, having no chemical science, I cannot say precisely when the colour begins to change. Public opinion is my only god, and I cannot remember having said a prayer, yet I never omit to kneel when occasion requires. I glory in having been uniformly unkind, and one of my great annoyances was an organ-grinder for whom the children dared to dance and went so far as to be merry. On the other hand, I affect minuets, stately music, and literature of the dullest character, but when a questionable novel has been boomed by being banned, I have later found in it passages tending to edification. I cannot pretend to regret my conduct, but, as there is no one present, these proceedings seem to me to lack importance, and I shall be glad when they are concluded, if only to give me a chance of attending several functions where, without my presence, I fear that they may degenerate into errors of taste, and even of happiness.”

The advocate was not specially downcast, though his relations with the prisoner had been out of the common. He spoke as one who had been attached to her royal person officially, so that anything approaching intimacy had been undesired, and consequently impossible. His manner was strictly legal, and he confined himself to dealing technically with his brief rather than with the merits or the reverse of the accused.

“I must emphasise the fact,” he said, “that although the prisoner has made an affidavit which is repulsive, yet she has accomplished much good. I contend that the lady to whom she has referred as ‘a woman’ requires a corrective, and that, if she were not checked by the incursions of my client, the world would fall into grave trouble. Not that I think all would be lost if what is called society were to go to pieces, but I would put it to your Lordship that masses have been made moral through fear of bad form, and that, during the process, they have acquired habits of self-denial which have stood them in good stead when assailed by their emotions. I believe that many have lived to bless their term of slavery to the accused, though, for the most part, her devotees lack imagination and are mainly suited for dressing shop-windows. This class, though large, may be dismissed as unimportant, but it is only just to say that they were as responsible for making the lady as bees for creating their queen. When they had outgrown her, they also treated her in much the same way as obtains among those whimsical insects. Meanwhile, human nature requires a moral policeman, and it has

been held by more than one that law without love is better than love without law.

“Had it not been for Mrs. Grundy, a great number of people would have gone straight to perdition, but whether that would have been worse, or whether life in Hades is preferable to inanition elsewhere, is an open question. Though the prisoner shows signs of bad health, she has by no means arrived at her end, but has, I am told, remarkable powers of recuperation. I would argue that she has not been guilty of bad feeling, for she has no feelings at all, being but the expression of self-defence on the part of the successful and the stupid. True, her ethical judgments are inconsistent, but beyond a doubt she has been an important asset in the maintenance of home life, in the restraint of libertinage and, given sufficient spectators, in producing courage.

“No one can deny that the accused has influenced laws in the direction of good, and, though the enemy of evolution, has retarded the wheels of anarchy. Bohemia is her *bête noire*, but, save for her presence, Bohemia would have gone perilously near to becoming a cesspool and its inhabitants a rabble. There have been times, my Lord, when I have been grateful to the prisoner, and few have attained to chivalry or good manners but have served their apprenticeship in her school. I trust that I have tersely placed before you the worthiest side of my case, and, when I contemplate the dangers of self-abandonment and the misuse of freedom by the majority, I venture to hope that your judgment will not be averse to the prisoner. I would go

the length of saying that a capital sentence would be a misfortune, and that a petition for a reprieve would be signed, not only by an immense number of parents and professors, but by the specially tempted and by those who know that she is probably their sole chance of being decent. I take it that you will pay no attention to those who represent merely her automatic devotees; and now I leave the affair in your hands, as alone deft enough to unravel a skein so tangled as to baffle human ingenuity."

The Judge's face was that of a philosopher pondering over the intricacies of a problem rather than of one employed in deciding the fate of a human being. In the prisoner he saw a principle which forms an integral part of civilisation, and he accepted the fact that the more complex it becomes, the more that principle is bound to exist. Never was there a figure more antipathetic to his outlook, but his charm lay in his being equally, if not more occupied with what was outside his range, but none the less absorbing in his eyes. Indeed, he seemed to curtail his sympathies where he was most intrigued, lest any sediment of self should colour his decisions or endanger his courtesy.

In this instance he could give full vent to his interest, and, as he looked at the accused, he pitied her for the rôle she had to play, realising that she was necessary in so far as the race had ceased to be simple. He was conscious that she was confined to no age or circumstance, and that she had the key to many a fair garden, though the open country knew her not. He was accustomed to her numerous disguises and the various aliases she had

adopted, not being shortsighted enough to regard her present title as more than the outcome of a smug and respectable moment. In other countries and at other periods she had been more picturesque, but the spirit of the world had always followed on the plucking of the fruit and had commissioned her to be its champion. When he addressed her he maintained an impersonal attitude, and there was something great in the way this mystic raised the drabest details because of their bearing on the welfare of humanity.

“I wonder whether you have at any time regretted the work in which you were employed, or the lifelessness which you produced in everything that was paralysed by your presence.”

“For the most part originality is non-existent among my followers, but it sometimes seemed, even to me, villainous to lead captive those who had the germs of glee.”

“Why do you parade under the guise of a woman, who presumably suggests tenderness, or, at least, is supposed to shed tears for those whom she has injured?”

“Because her cruelty can be greater than that of men, and she can sustain her vindictiveness longer, in spite of the cries of her victims.”

“Though your statement was defiant, would you gravely assert that, having owned yourself to be the kill-joy of your day, you have effected good?”

“Since I take no actual pleasure in frolics or vice, I am, to a large extent, on the side of the angels, provided that, in their flight, they are careful of their drapery.”

“What is your position when laxity prevails and when virtue is regarded as a mark of want of breeding?”

“I then adopt another dress and join the revels.”

“And when puritanism is to the fore?”

“None is soberer or more unctuous than myself.”

“How would you briefly define your scheme?”

“As I have already outlined it, my scheme has been to make mortals arrange their affairs by the creature rather than by the Creator, and care for nothing save the approval of their fellows, lest they should win the reward of Him who seeth in secret.”

“Do you mean that each should love his neighbour?”

“On the contrary, that he should fear him, though he should lose no opportunity of getting the better of him when possible, and of scandalising him in his absence.”

“Have you any apprehensions as to the verdict which I may pronounce?”

“None, for, though you may express your opinion, it has no value for those for whom you do not exist.”

“What would you say if I condemned you to death?”

“The condemnation would never take effect, as another Mrs. Grundy would immediately appear, and a reaction in my favour would follow such drastic measures.”

The Judge then summed up: “I find myself in agreement with much that you have stated in your evidence, and understand how you represent a guild of the superficial and less adventurous, which acquits you of personal responsibility. Having had much intercourse with

your friends the Scribes and Pharisees, I feel to a certain extent at home in your company, but I have always preferred that of publicans and sinners. It would not be fair, however, to disregard the righteousness of the former, which has been rebuked before now, not because of its existence, but because of its shortcomings. I have no prejudice against manners, provided they are not overdone, and am in favour, at times, of the stately and the dignified, if not adopted for effect. The reason I have an unalloyed contempt for you, which would not obtain in the case of a real personality, is that no form should be called good if it is only form. Your harmfulness lies in having made men look, not so much down, as on a level with themselves, which is the more fatal to their ever looking upward, so that between you and myself there is bound to be an unwritten antagonism.

“How it is that your disciples have been willing to barter the Kingdom of God for such as you I have never been able to comprehend. On your own showing, you have supplied them with funereal dulness, but they still worship you as a goddess, and willingly allow you to tread on them with your high-heeled shoes, or, as at the present moment, with your largish boots. I can only assume that the mutual admiration society of the unintelligent means more to them than the contemplation of the stars, the glory of a gallop, entrancing music, or the sting of a storm at sea. Your advocate has rightly pointed out the advantage of yourself as a set-off to the Quartier Latin, and certain authors might do well not to forget you, while I commend to your attention the

Press, which needs a portion of you as an antidote. There are traits in your character which I am not above admiring, but I implore you to keep off the children, to avoid schools, and to leave the Senate House severely alone, lest there should be a general revolt against you, when the ruin would bring you no pleasure, and the spoils would fall to your mortal enemy.

"It is with that enemy I would advise you to live, if you are both to exist at once, and I can imagine that, if you and Dame Nature were to see a little more of each other, it might bring about considerable good. What I would seek to effect is your combination, though I can fancy that at first you would find yourselves by no means congenial companions. You would serve to check her wildness, and she might learn from you improvements in her dress which would prove some consolation to you, though I should be sorry if she took you altogether as a pattern. You could not dwell with her long without being better, and, if her children clambered round your neck, you would one day break into a laugh. You must know her to discover that, in spite of her rough exterior, she can smile as no other woman; and, if you dare to stay with her, she can kiss away tears where the tenderest mother fails. Without a doubt she will often curse you, and you, on your part, will hate her for her contempt of money, diamonds, pearls, and similar trifles, but if you want warmth and glow and, above all, complete understanding, you will find her the most sympathetic and forgiving of friends. She may not pray much, at least formally, and she may frighten you by her

tirades against the ceremonies which are the breath of life to you, but when it comes to a pinch and when you are thirsty, she will give you water from a rippling brook and milk in a lordly dish. It is beyond my power to make people love one another, and to insist on it has often had the reverse effect, but there is one argument which seldom fails to a person of your type — namely, that she needs your help. Without you she will degenerate, but with you in moderate doses she will vastly improve, and I close with looking forward to the time when two of the world's greatest enemies, if separated, shall together prove a valuable friend."

CHAPTER XVII

THE CLERIC

THERE was a strong atmosphere of piety about him, as he faced the situation with a calm and dignity all in his favour. A closer scrutiny suggested less strength, while the thinness of his lips gave no good impression. His obstinacy was evident, and it was clear that he would not be easily dislodged from his position. He recalled hundreds like himself, and introduced a separate caste which was alien to the directness of the Court. It would be difficult to explain the sense of stiffness which he brought with him, combined with an unmistakable goodness that permeated his whole being. His assurance, in spite of an exaggerated humility, gave rise to irritation, and as he took his seat with exemplary deference, he seemed unconscious of the reason why he had been summoned.

He had prepared no defence, deeming it unnecessary for one of his integrity, and no one could have denied him an admirable courage and willingness to suffer. The importance of the proceedings was magnified by the influence which he had obviously wielded, while his meeting with the Judge, whom he resembled, yet from whom he was strangely dissimilar, created profound in-

terest. The fact that he had been out to save his generation was beyond question, but the success or failure of his mission remained to be proved. The longer you watched him, the more you loved and were repelled by him, nor could you avoid the conclusion that he was hardly so much an individual as the holder of an office that had been handed down without a change for centuries. To what country he belonged, it did not even occur to the observer to ask, as all else was merged in his portrayal of religion, which was common to every age, and to the most varied forms of faith. The Judge's position was rendered the more difficult since the Cleric seemed to regard any punishment as almost a luxury. Penitence having been a constant habit, he rose to make his confession as to the manner born, though the notion of being taken at his own valuation would to him have appeared preposterous.

"I would begin by owning," he said, "that I am a grievous sinner, and that I am conscious of having left undone much which ought to have been done and done much which had best been omitted. In view of the sanctity of my calling, my dedication to the noblest ends and my separation from ordinary folk, I cannot but feel that I have fallen short in many particulars. More than once it has struck me that, though I never shrank from the most menial tasks, I felt superior in doing them, and looked down on those towards whom I assumed an abject attitude, but who were virtually in my hands. From my youth I was brought up to look upon myself as a medium between God and man, and,

though I preferred to remain poor, the better to illustrate the ministry, I have always held that the power of the State was nothing to that of the priesthood, nor am I one of those who believe in over intimacy with the uninitiated. I hope that I have spared no effort to save a soul, but my chief anxiety was the correctness of his creed. By correctness I mean that it should tally with my own, having been instructed that the secret of universal Truth had by some miracle of Grace been placed in our hands. The misfortune of the pagan and the fact of his being in an overwhelming majority used to distress me, but, as I became more subservient to the Divine Will, I ceased to trouble about these matters as beyond me, and as interfering with the even tenour of my days. In this I may have been remiss, but I rejoice to think that missionary zeal is on the increase, though I have little or no use for the vague enthusiasm which is sadly callous as to rites and ceremonies dearer to me than the questionable benefits of civilisation.

“Not that I do not believe in Universalism, though I prefer the Greek word, and would, I trust, willingly offer my frail body at the stake in its defence; but a dangerous conception of its meaning now obtains, and I wish to make it plain that the term is applicable only to those who strictly adhere to the limitations of our special body. How it is so, I cannot say, but this is another of the mysteries which I would rather leave and which have never ruffled my equanimity. My dear brothers outside the pale call me a bigot on certain points, but, as I have repeatedly stated in our Magazine, I cannot for an instant

surrender the keystone of our edifice, without which it would crumble to the ground. If a single concession is made to our beloved enemies in this respect, I would answer by an argument which I hold to be invincible, and which takes the form of a question — namely, Where should we be? Concerning the fate of the millions of infants who have never been subjected to baptism, without consulting them, I can only refer to certain passages of the Holy Fathers, and cheerfully add this to the mysteries to which I have alluded.

“I would confess that I may perhaps have failed in technical obedience to my superiors, but here I would dwell on the fact that I did not agree with them, and, though this may suggest personal inspiration, I would take refuge in the special privileges of my office. I hope that I have never been found wanting in rudeness when it was my duty, but I lived in troublous times, when the laity threatened to encroach on our sacred precincts, and when it was necessary to keep them in their place. On the present occasion I am surprised and even hurt at being arraigned before one in whom I am unable to see the emblems of an authority competent to deal with such as myself. I should have thought that I had the right to be tried by one of my peers, but I wish to accept my disappointment with a good grace, and to listen with becoming respect to your admonitions.”

The advocate braced himself for a great effort, not forgetting that the issues of the soul were far greater than those connected with the material side of life. It

was strange that his friendship with the accused was not more intimate, and, though he undertook his task with a certain sympathy, it lacked the personal touch apparent in some of the more human and, on paper, more criminal cases.

"I have never known the prisoner well," he said, "though I have seldom been absent from him, and he has made it a constant rule to quote me as his inward monitor and guide. Possibly I may be prejudiced, but, having taken genuine pleasure in our early companionship, as the years went on I regret to say that I lost heart, and felt comparatively frozen out as his humanness decreased. Nevertheless I am bound to be a witness to his virtues, and to an unselfishness bordering on self-immolation. From morning to night he was engaged in good works, which rendered him impregnable on the part of those who felt the fallacy of his position; but the meekness of his bearing and his willingness to receive rebuke disarmed his opponents, and rendered him a subject for adulation among the devout.

"I would not imply that this involved compliance with what was not allowed by the trade union to which he belonged, but the semblance of great lowliness was mistaken for the genuine article. That he had the essence of these attributes at the outset I have not a shadow of doubt, nor was he aware that by degrees they became an advertisement, to the disgust of many who were striving to rid themselves of their own egoism without making any fuss. I myself have often been enthused by the unworldliness and severity to self exhibited by the prisoner,

until the fateful kink of clericalism displayed itself and drove me into obscurity. I could tell of deeds of devotion which put his critics to shame, and, so far as morals were concerned, of a blameless life which was a protest against the slackness of his age. His disposition had an extremely sweet side when he forgot his office, while his tenderness to the sick or dying was phenomenal. He spared himself no pains where there was any sign of trouble, and, although it is true that he was domineering and never lost the manner of a schoolmaster, he thought nothing of sharing his meals, sitting up at night, and wearing himself out on behalf of others. He reproached himself for the slightest dereliction of duty, and would have looked on a 'comfortable living,' or the least personal indulgence as a fall from grace.

"His mere presence cleansed the streets in his immediate neighbourhood, and the purity of his face inspired many to aim at holiness. Legends of charity and kindness gathered round him, till he was credited with miraculous powers by those who esteemed him as something more than man. He preferred to live in a class beneath his own, feeling that, like a Brahmin, he could afford to disregard social distinctions. His knowledge of the world was nil, which may account for his contractions. So fascinated was he with mediævalism that he chose to wear blinkers, and to persuade himself that progress was an invention of the devil. He really believed that he and his ilk had the key of knowledge, though an inspection of his library showed that his reading was limited to theological works. Allowance must be made for

his combative instinct, which caused him to rejoice in a discussion as a soldier longs for a scrap. His hatred of heresy approached a mania, though it would be difficult to define what heresy meant for him. His master passion was the salvation of the world, but if that world refused to be saved according to his methods, he consigned it to hell without a qualm, and his lack of hesitation prompted many to adore one who was certain of the unknowable.

“If my remarks have been caustic and my praise problematical, it is because there is such virtue in the accused, and I am so disturbed by the net result of his influence on any country, that I can only leave the adjustment to your Lordship, whose charity covers a multitude of faults which were never intended, taking into account every effort, however misguided, to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven among men.”

The demeanour of the Judge recalled that of a parent to a child who had not understood. He felt no anger, since the heart of the accused was in tune with his own, and in his talk he took it for granted that the mistakes of this would-be martyr were traceable more to ignorance and the tyranny of tradition than to himself.

“I should be glad if you could explain to me how your conception of life corresponded to facts as you found them, and how you proposed to deal with the tragedies of existence by your teaching.”

“I carefully abstained from facing the former, and, as to the latter, I was brought up to consider that my duty began and ended with insistence on my particular faith.”

“When you say brought up, did you always occupy this position?”

“By no means, having been much the same as others and enjoying the world to the full, until I was mercifully instructed in a training which employed the interval between the University and my ordination.”

“Was it then that you left your manhood behind you and learned to adopt a casuistry foreign to your nature and to the instincts of your country?”

“My sole answer is that we were carefully and rigidly educated in doctrines that had been handed down from time immemorial.”

“Did you compare the longevity of other creeds with that of your own?”

“I can’t say it occurred to me, but I looked on the world as immersed in darkness until our Light came.”

“What was your attitude, for instance, towards the Jews?”

“I pitied them and always felt a personal aversion to them, though I supported missions designed to assist them to a knowledge of the truth.”

“How would you have known your special truth unless it had come to you through them?”

“That is an awkward question, and I must confess that their Psalms have been one of my greatest helps.”

“Did not the law of evolution come home to you, and did it not appear possible that the relation of your creed to theirs (from your point of view) might be as the full-blown rose to the bud?”

"An interesting metaphor, though a trifle humbling to those of us who have had the special revelation."

"What would you say of Buddha, Mahomet, and other well-known names in the development of religious thought?"

"I am afraid that they were sadly misled, and have always looked on them as outside the fold."

"Have you ever read the Koran?"

"Most certainly not, though I have heard that it contains passages unfit for publication."

"Are you interested in other religions which affect millions of your fellow-beings?"

"I think it dangerous to dabble in such literature, and have rigorously avoided what might tempt me to doubt."

"Would you say there were many religions?"

"Unfortunately, yes."

"How many gods would you say there were?"

"Only one."

"Then how can there be more than one religion?"

"You are getting too abstruse, and I should be more at home if we were talking about our own, when I could supply you with all the parochial details you might require."

"How did you stand towards science, and the difficulties which assailed the rising generation in believing what you insisted on as not only proven, but incapable of expansion?"

"I never ceased to warn the young against any growth in knowledge which might shake them in the faith of their forefathers."

"Were you much given to the study of your own Sa-

cred Books, bound together in a Volume which you must have held exceeding dear?"

"I confess that I preferred a compilation of prayers made by the authorities centuries ago, though it entailed regular reading of portions of the Volume referred to at stated hours."

"I understand; but, to put it plainly, was it this Book which coloured your life and was at the back of all your actions, or was it the Church to which you belonged, and which made you regard that Book as secondary to its commands?"

"I would assert that it was the latter rather than the former by which I regulated my days, being opposed to the theory that these Sacred Books should be in the hands of the ignorant unless interpreted by the clergy."

"Did your mother bring you up like that?"

"I cannot say she did."

"What was the result of her living on the Book?"

"The most beautiful life I can imagine, and one which, I regret to say, I rarely see nowadays."

"Did you positively believe that the majority of each generation would be doomed to eternal flames?"

"I am afraid I did, but now you put it so baldly, I expect it was no more than a pious opinion, though I still hold that, if there be a God, there must also be a Hell."

"In that I agree with you, and all who forget the former find themselves in the latter, though its nature and duration for them may be otherwise than your dogmas implied. It would be interesting to know what you thought of the various forms of your own creed

which were aiming at the same goal, but through other methods."

"I fear they were anathema to me and, at times, even worse — namely, vulgar."

"What would you say was the strongest influence in your official life, apart from the devotional side, on which I have no wish to cast any discredit?"

"We had an excellent newspaper, which effected our union and sustained our zeal in an admirable manner."

"Was it conducive to the spirit of charity?"

"On the contrary, or its sales would have gone down and we should have run the risk of hopelessly agreeing with one another."

"How can you associate such an enterprise with the Founder of your Creed, whose object was to bring men together and make them love each other, as the sole mark of His discipleship?"

"The journal alluded to often spoke of such union, on condition that its readers adhered to its own plan. But, if there had been no controversy, our lives would have been dreary in the extreme, and, save for its weekly publication, we might have forgotten that we were continually at war."

"At war with whom?"

"With our fellow disciples who would not accept our shibboleths."

"Would you not call that a sinister influence of the worst kind?"

"It was patronised by the holiest among us, and conducted on strictly business principles."

“Did it often refer to the Book which I mentioned?”

“I thought I had explained that, if once this Book were read and believed in by all, such a paper could not have existed, and, from a party point of view, we should have become disorganized.”

“Did it never occur to you that such narrowness was fatal to bringing about this communion?”

“I was of opinion that this was alone obtainable by the observance of one set of rules, drawn up by holy men of old and insisted on without exception, however large the majority of those who refused, to their own destruction, to accept them.”

“Was your mind made up on the subject of marriage, or did you consider the multitudes who suffered through terrible mistakes and were chained together to their mutual damnation?”

“I was glad to think that when the magic words had been spoken by us, who thus acquired dominion over the home, no change was possible, and any reconsideration of the question was out of the power of those concerned.”

And so on and so on *ad infinitum*.

The Judge saw that to convince the accused was hopeless, but in giving his judgment he preserved the same sense of pity for his utter lack of imagination, and for the gross conceit which characterised him.

“I am more grieved than I can say at the attitude which you still maintain, but you are not so much to be condemned as those who twisted your nature, when you were hardly more than a boy, and turned you into

a machine for their own ends. That men are prone to idolatry goes without saying, and there is little difference between those who worship the letter of a book and those who adore a piece of bread which they affect to be able to change into the Creator Himself. Both may have a considerable element of truth, but it is incumbent on all to realise that the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. It is pitiable that you should not have been more intent on walking in the footsteps of Him whom you call Master. He was crucified not by the bad, but by the religious of His day, because He pointed out all that was involved in what they professed to believe, though for them it had become hardly more than formalism.

“True, the power of your uniform among the masses, especially in the villages, is enormous, but it is on the wane. The reason is that you over-magnify your office, that you are not so simple or so humble as you appear, and that, when it comes to plain loving, you act it out rather less than the average man. This wretched internecine warfare is ruining your cause, as also your exaggerated interest in questions which have no reference to life. When it is a matter of genuine trouble, such as abounds on every side, thoughtful men have no use for those who are concerned with points that have no more bearing on actualities than the distinctions between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

“You are too few to afford to fall out, and, if you would inspire men, you should preserve a united front against the world, the flesh, and the devil, which are your only real enemies. Your heart should be as big as the uni-

verse, and you should remember that all souls, whatever their belief, are equally dear in the sight of Him who brought them into being. You have no right to dominate your fellows, or to insist that their arrangements should be subject in every detail to your behests. Surely, since you took what you call 'Orders,' your duty is to take them from those set over you, and it is nothing less than wicked to aid and abet the superstitious tendencies of men by claiming supernatural powers which you have never possessed.

"If it is true that confession is necessary, it should be mutual. It is iniquitous that you should spoil the harmony of households, or get under your thumb young people at an impressionable age, making it well-nigh impossible for them ever to regain that glorious heritage of liberty for which they were intended. You will discover that, unless you allow men to do their own thinking, you will soon enough disappear, and, if I might advise you, it would be to read the Book of which you have spoken almost with contempt, though, if you really knew it, and if its spirit had entered into your being, it would do more to bring about genuine religion than any other factor.

"Do not think that I underrate your special difficulties, or the excellence of the personal life which you led, but I deprecate this introduction of a caste system on which you pride yourself, and which has proved a pest wherever it has prevailed. I regard such journals as you have spoken of with supreme sadness, and it would be a wise rule to refuse to read them, lest bitterness should be culti-

vated to the hurt of the common cause. If reduced to facts, it amounts to making money by doing the devil's work of dividing the religiously inclined, than which it is difficult to conceive a more blame-worthy proceeding.

"As for the other religions, which are more ancient and whose adherents are more numerous than your own, I can only pray that you may treat them with profound respect, remembering that this one God, whom you concede knows best, has elected to speak to the conscience of each in language he can understand. If your Master means anything, He means universal, all-embracing Love, which longs to bring men to the Divine Heart, by whatever paths; and it is only by a life modelled on such an ideal that you will win the world. You will never do it by dragooning or lecturing or scolding, but only by unvaried service and by allowing to each their personal freedom, though always holding up the highest standards, for which you are exceptionally equipped. You will do more harm than you can guess by permitting people to worship you, whereas, if you wish permanently to help your generation, you will step down from your platform and, on a level with your fellows, from whom you also have much to learn, gently persuade them towards loving God, which more are desirous of doing than you have any notion.

"I have no penance to impose, except that you go back to the world as a wealthy squire with a wife and a large family. Your passion will still be the good of the people on your estate, and though a layman, you shall take on you to preach the Gospel and in every possible

way to bring them to the only source of true happiness. In this you will be thwarted by the parson (your own nominee), who shall act the local pope and shall denounce you as far more guilty than if you were the conventionally wicked man. He himself being ignorant of the meaning of salvation, and limited to providing husks for his children, as he shall call your tenants, will declare it to be outrageous that you should presume to offer them living bread in words which they can understand. As time goes on you will be driven to the conclusion that only a converted clergy have the right or the power to preach the Gospel, and if they are such, they not only allow the direct action of the Spirit on the hearts of all who have been born again, but are deeply grateful for the fact. Your money will be thrown in your face, and, however much you may suffer within, your martyrdom will be unrecognised, and you will be credited with trespassing on the preserves of the priesthood, till the whole business nauseates you and you almost despair of making the brotherhood understand. Under such circumstances your discipline will be, without sacrificing one iota of the best that is in you, to carry out in all simplicity the essence of the doctrines you have always taught. This will be for you the severest punishment, and it will take you all your time to put those lessons into practice."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PARTY POLITICIAN

THIS bearing was that of a man perfectly at his ease and convinced that he was dealing with the affairs of the universe. He represented the union of a perpetual smile and studied solemnity resulting from long practice, and his wealth of manner made it difficult to believe that he could ever be simple. Withal, there was a coolness of demeanour and lack of candour which told of repression, and of his having become more of a machine than a man. Not that he did not show every token of courtesy and readiness to please, but, if you had wanted a favour, the Partisan was the last person to whom you would have gone unless with the offer of votes in exchange. He had a *sangfroid* which bid fair not to be easily upset, and, if peace and war hung in the balance, he would have remained unmoved.

The effect was both alluring and displeasing, while you would have been hard put to it where to place him socially. The result was a masterpiece of unreality, yet you could not fail to detect lines denoting power, and a flash in the eyes telling of enthusiasm without inspiration. In any case unwonted interest was aroused as to the causes productive of such a type, whose very

presence chilled the air and dealt a death-blow to schemes for the country's good. Many other characters would doubtless have been classed as more wicked than this astute spinner of plates, but for few was it harder to feel any love. He observed, as was his habit, the etiquette of the moment, suggesting that, so far as he was concerned, everything was in order. He had served on so many committees that his soul had been reduced to a vanishing point, and he bowed with a stereotyped pleasantness to the Judge, whose expression startled him into becoming almost sincere.

The probing of the heart was a new experience to this propounder of platitudes, who had grown to regard all emotions as detrimental to the dignity of a great assembly. The idea of such a person as himself being subjected to the test of truth was a novel situation, the more painful as the verdict rested not with his constituents, whom he had learned to manage, but with one concerned with the conscience of those brought before him. All this slowly unfolded itself to the prisoner, who hated scenes of any kind, but who at last took in the gravity of a position which no official urbanity could affect.

“I am here in a Court of Law,” he began, “to which I am not unaccustomed, to make a statement of my career, but I trust that, though plain speaking is highly unpleasant and has for years been foreign to my nature, it may prove satisfactory. I regret to say that, when I took up politics as a trade, personal ambition was my prime motive. I was attracted not only by the publicity

which it promised, but by its honours and rewards. In my younger days patriotism was for me a strong ideal, but I soon found it too expensive, as it involved the martyrdom of 'the mean,' for which I was not prepared.

"Coming from a stock which required to raise itself, and being devoid of the gambling spirit, I put this attractive picture from me, though I satisfied my scruples by the subterfuge that when I had made a great name I might use it for the general weal. I inwardly scouted the theory of sacrifice, and could never adopt literally the legend of One who, after being condemned for a criminal, occupied a throne. The dreams of my youth were those of glory without previous shame. The Gospel, though the pathos of the book never failed to touch me, would have altered all my schemes if I had gone further than admiring the Hero. Politically He interested me, but, though I saw how easily His Name might be used on a platform, the more I read of Him, the more I became convinced that He could not be claimed by either side. This is why I laid the volume down, as it would have been an awkward companion in the journey which I intended to make.

"Fortunately for me I had a ready tongue, what is called an excellent address, a heart thoroughly in order, and a minimum of conscience, so I started well. I saw plainly that I could only make headway by adopting certain shibboleths, and I soon found that honesty would have landed me on a cross bench, since I discovered myself to be in agreement on many points with both

sides. To such ridiculous suggestions I gave the quietus, but this did not prevent my indulging in fine sentiments about every consideration being merged in the salvation of the Empire. Before I knew it the Vox Populi became for me the Vox Dei, experts on the subject having taught me that the truest skill lay in detecting the same, while professing to lead it.

“In the meantime I avoided contact with anything which might prove an annoyance, for health became increasingly important, and I had to keep myself in perfect preservation. Party system prevented any attack of nerves. The more automatic I became, the easier it was to consort privately with my opponents, each of us being equally callous, yet hugely philosophical over our good cheer. We became adepts at simulated enthusiasm, and virtually entered into a bargain as to which side should be in or out, almost on the half-time principle in a match. The item of country retired into comparative insignificance, except now and again when we blazed out into pretended fury, to the admiration of the masses, who enjoyed the farce, backing us as supporters are apt to do their favourites in the ring. We had not the remotest intention of hurting one another, and, when the contest was over, we discussed the matter with perfect amity and pocketed our fees.

“However despicable this may appear, any other method was impossible. Had we been out for genuine service, we should have found it difficult to keep the ball rolling, since we should have arrived at our conclusions and have had to get to solid work sooner than was agree-

able. I admit also having thwarted movements for which I had deep respect from the moment that I found they interfered with party plans, allowing others to suffer for principles which I secretly admired, while I openly denounced those who held them as offenders against law and order. I feel unable to confess, even here, to the tricks of which I, in common with many of my companions, was guilty, but I think I touched my lowest when I mercilessly trod on the defenceless and, while so doing, was hailed as a saviour of my country.

“No one need tell me of the heroes in the same House who were bearing the burden and heat of the day and who were never mentioned. When it served my purpose to deride them I did so, with an assumed warmth which procured for me the gratitude of the public. I feel ashamed to recall conversations I had with my wife after these exhibitions, when she strove to allay my misgivings with the thought of the honours which she might eventually share as the price of my unworthiness. Possibly if I had been alone in the world, I should have thrown in my lot with the real men to whom my honour inclined me, but, though I was officially opposed to female domination, I am by no means sure that my politics were not somewhat coloured by home influence. If I were asked whether I repent, I should say that, having become insensible to the spur of noble impulse, I cannot weep unless the word has been passed round from my leaders. I realise as a politician that I misused one of the greatest trusts which can be put into a man’s hands, and from my heart I wish some chance of redemption

might be afforded me, though, if I were to repent publicly, I should not be heard of again.

“With a wave of sincerity which takes me off my feet, I accuse myself of having been an eloquent charlatan, and nothing more. Unintentionally I have been ruined by my gifts, while the world looms larger for me than ever it used to do. The seductions of good living, the snares of notoriety, and the fascination of the limelight have caused me to forget the zeal in which I once indulged. When I recall how easily I was affected by pain and how I burned to become the champion of every noble cause, I hang down my head with shame to think to what I have reduced myself in the pursuit of power. Witnessing as I did that main principles were at a discount, and that everything fell flat unless rivalry was imported into it, I saw that there was no place for meekness in one who desired to get to the top of the ladder. This is why I sounded the battle-cry of Party and did my best to make my voice ring throughout the land, though I was not half so earnest nor half so keen as when I knelt in our simple home and pleaded that I might one day become a patriot. It is clear to me what might have been accomplished had I not been moved by egotism, and I trust that, after hearing my tardy admissions, you will indicate a way in which I may be allowed to prove my devotion to the land of my birth, which still holds the highest place in my affections.”

The advocate in his address betrayed more emotion than had been shown by his client, except at the last, and, in defending the Partisan, said: “I would preface my

remarks by stating that I have always been the accused's best friend, though it is hard to recognise in the speaker the boy who was so lovable. He has become hardened almost out of knowledge, but the feelings which he denies, though dormant, are more powerful than he imagines. I remember how he dreamed of laying down his life to expiate the wrongs which reason told him demand a substitute in every age. In those days he was an immature Curtius, asking for a gulf into which to fling himself, and so clear-sighted was he that he detected precisely where it yawned. It was not till later that to his distorted vision this gulf appeared to have closed together and to be carpeted with flowers, some of which he always wore as a token that all was well.

"I would ask your Lordship's indulgence in dealing with his public life, with its starving and gradual numbing of moral sensibility. I would call attention to the great danger of its rewards, and to the weight of its responsibilities, which, if seriously entered upon, have often proved too great for human endurance. The inconsistencies confessed by the Partisan are intelligible when it is taken into consideration how rarely any, short of a genius, can afford to be himself if he desires ultimately to succeed. The question of country receded all too easily in favour of party when what had been originally his vocation degenerated into a profession. I would argue that he has been punished severely for this in having lost a joy for which nothing could atone, and having forfeited a rapture which is the perquisite of the disinterested. This calls for compassion, and I know that

you will not be misled by a surface success which, for a man whose eyes have been opened, brings its own doom.

“The natural impulses of the accused were higher than those he has deplored, but, so ruthless is the effect of party and such is the price of exploiting the name of Fatherland for private gain, that its victims cease to be ashamed of its betrayal, provided this may add to their distinction. I have seen the Partisan, on his way home after a division, despising himself as he was cheered by the crowd whom he had been willing to spoil by his oratory in order to gain their suffrages, but conscious in his own heart that, if he had told them the truth, they would have become his enemies. At least he would have felt a man. I intercede for one whose real self is good, on the ground that, had he lived in other times, when money counted for less and ideas for more, he would have become apostolic. Had there been call for pluck, in which he was never deficient, to defend hearth and home, without distinction of party and without room for hypocrisy, he would have been among the first to shed his blood on the battlefield.”

The Judge regarded the accused with respect for the brilliant promise of his early life, but with sadness at the clouds by which it had been eclipsed. He looked on the Partisan with infinite sorrow when he thought how the affairs of the city might become a game for personal ends. He figured millions whose welfare largely depended on the motives of legislators, and it came to him that, unless there was something more than oratory or ability at the

back of their words, these would die on the passing breeze. He recalled exceptions who had been as conspicuous for piety as for eloquence, nor was it surprising that they had swayed the hearts of the people as wind the standing corn. Whatever their keenness as politicians while they lived, so eminently in touch with Heaven had they been that their party spirit had long been forgotten, but their names were world-wide and imperishable. This simple man, with no honours attaching, but with an unbounded love for mankind, was deeply moved as he strove to bring back the prisoner to the visions of his early days. His desire was to reproduce in him his secret longing to become a public benefactor, which he had endangered from the moment he had first spoken of it.

The following conversation passed between them:

“Was it ambition which led you to enter public life, or was there an admixture of impulses, such as the desire to raise your family, and to win the praise of those whom you most respected?”

“I was mainly influenced by the former, though my temptation is to plead the latter, which doubtless played a certain part, and possibly the strongest, after I had won my spurs.”

“How far were you affected by money in taking up politics?”

“Not originally, but later it became a great incentive, until I was willing to sell my soul for office, seeing that otherwise I could not keep up the position I had reached.”

“How would you account for your change of views, which, at the time, was tantamount to a scandal?”

“I regret to say that I should never have crossed the House unless I had been assured that my chances would be improved by so doing. The fact is that I soon looked at every question, not from the point of view of what I felt, but of what I persuaded myself the country wanted. Given such an attitude, it became almost immaterial to me on which side I was, though I hate myself now more than I can say for leaving my party when it was in low water. I worked, however, immensely hard for the Opposition, having detected the turn of the tide which was sweeping it into power.”

“Did you grow to be convinced of its sincerity and become genuinely converted?”

“I can hardly say that I did. By that time I had ceased to be much interested in aught save party triumph. If I was fully satisfied that our measures were for the public good, I was still more influenced by the fact that it was we who had initiated them.”

“Were you hurt by the woes of the poor, the disadvantages of women, the discrepancies between private convictions and public statements, and much that, to a sensitive person, would have come perilously near to falsehood?”

“Possibly, to a certain degree, but I was a public man, and what my party decided, that I accepted, without going into sophistries which would render politics intolerable.”

“Did you love your country, through talking about

which you made your fortune and achieved a standing out of all proportion to your merits?"

"Yes, in a vague sort of way; at least I was always ready to abuse the foreigner, if it was in the air, unless there was some Entente on hand, when it would have been absurd to look too closely into the morale of the proceedings."

"Did you pose at all as a religionist?"

"Now and again. If I remember rightly, I was more than once quoted as a champion of the orthodox Church, while at another time I was hailed as a liberator of the oppressed from the chains which she had forged through ages of superstition and fraud. Needless to say I was on different sides on these occasions."

"Did you never feel rebuked as you witnessed the self-sacrifice of others for the truths you had once adored?"

"Certainly. What I do not seem able to explain to myself is that I daily became less susceptible of a loyalty which would have landed me in a minority of one, if I had been true to the inward voices."

"How did you reconcile your conscience to the subterfuge of pretending to lead public opinion while being led by it, as appears in your confession?"

"When I heard such a doctrine for the first time from a prominent statesman, I spurned it for what it was worth, yet I not only grew accustomed to it but soon became one of its foremost exponents."

"Were you not ashamed to regulate your sentiments by your audiences, while you knew that you were denying your private revelations?"

“I confess that I thought only of my victories, and so intoxicated was I with applause that I should have thrust aside everything that threatened my place as an idol of the people.”

“Would you say that, after this brief examination, you are reduced to anything like repentance?”

“Such an expression would, I think, be premature, but I begin to see the unwise-dom of my plan, not so much from personal sorrow, as from the fact that my influence was superficial, and that my name is bound to be forgotten.”

“And why should it be forgotten?”

“Because the foundation was wrong, and because in my inmost heart I am conscious that, if I had had the courage of my convictions, my country would have stood first and I should have been content to be unknown.”

“What is it you care for most at the present moment?”

“The welfare of the poor, which I have exploited for my own purposes, and the justice which I denied because I held it would not pay.”

“Would you be glad to return and, in the same place, stand up for those same convictions, though they landed you on the cross?”

“Forgive my answer, but I have had more than enough of public life, preferring, if you can so arrange it, that, without further risk to my vanity, I may serve that same country without mention of my name.”

The Judge regarded the Partisan with respect for his early intentions. There was little anger in his words, knowing as he did that the accused had been morally

mad for a series of years, and he measured to a nicety the anguish of a public person in being shorn of his self-esteem. He did not lose sight of the cost of his confession to the prisoner, therefore he looked on it as almost a sufficient sentence that he should have been in the dock. Such consideration on the part of the Judge was enhanced by the fact that he himself had tasted fleeting praise, and had the unique gift of being made all things to all men. For the moment the Partisan was to him as Dagon fallen from his pedestal. This is why he was unusually tender, as also because he knew that the heart of the man before him was in the right place, and that the best democracy was the ground colour of his being. So careful had he been in this regard that he had long felt the need of being alone, and, after any days of special achievement, he would consecrate the nights to communing with Heaven that he might retain a sense of his own dependence.

“Further rebuke,” he said, “would only serve to revive the combative in your nature, and to render you more aggressive. The thunders of Sinai could never meet your case, but coals of fire are needed to burn away the alloy which accrued from your contact with the crowd. Into that crowd you stepped from the shelter of your home to do battle with wrong in the cause of the oppressed, but the very gratitude which acclaimed you as deliverer proved your temptation and changed you beyond recognition. In face of success it is impossible to retain integrity without humility, and your fault lies in your utter forgetfulness of the only power calculated

to keep you lowly in spite of your triumphs. The realisation of your present outlook, compared to the standard with which you started, must bring with it a remorse to which I have no desire to add, but, with all respect, I would convey to you what you have lost in your so-called gain.

“When I think of the weak you have abandoned, of the words with which you have juggled, of the promises which you never fulfilled, and of the needs which you have used as steps whereby to mount to heights of your own devising, I tremble that the public conscience should be subject to the inconsistencies of its heroes. Not that you do not love your nation, or ever loved it half so much as now, when the possibility of proving it has been removed from you. No one knows better than yourself that what you require is withdrawal from the public gaze. You must be unknown if your self-consciousness is to be eradicated. The ills which have furnished you with a subject for eloquence must be transferred from the realm of theory to that of fact. You must sample them on your own account, and for a while confine yourself to dealing with the unit, if you are to become less glib in the description of them and less airy in your pledges as to their removal. To speak, even, of the public good is a danger to you, but you must privately pay the price of a sacrifice far more expensive than the verbiage in which you have been too prolific. You must know experimentally what you knew only on paper, if you are to approach the same high task without preaching to others and yourself being cast away.

“You need not despair, for you have been gifted with rare material, and if there is no waste in nature, still less is there any in the remodelling of character. You were intended to lead and lead you shall, but it will be in other directions than those into which you have been diverted by the will o’ the wisp of self, under the aspect of glory. When you have been sufficiently trained, you will resume your position at the head of your troops, but amongst them there will be neither uniforms nor medals. They will be mainly composed of the helpless, the disfranchised, and the downtrodden, so that you will be jeered at for the rabble behind you. You shall become enamoured of forlorn hopes, though you will cease to use the word when engaged on the thing itself.

“Tired you may be, worn out, and in all probability despised; but the only honours you then shall covet will be the lines on your face and the scars which you shall undoubtedly receive. Once more you shall be thrilled at the story of a disappearance by which Rome was saved from her enemies, and you shall gain something more than admiration for a Man Who knew no party compared to His country, which for Him embraced the world. Few characters shall touch such a height of joy when the Cross is no longer amongst your ‘properties’ but has become your own property.”

CHAPTER XIX

LA CROUPIÈRE

A MODERN type appeared in the dock. She was preternaturally calm, and it was a question whether she was alive or not, being in perfect health. Never had there been such an instance of successful unreality, but her effect was glacial, and the attraction she exercised recalled the legend of Medusa. The cruelty of the lady was effectually disguised, and there was nothing to prevent a stranger from regarding her with unfeigned admiration. She represented the last word in egoism, being uninterested in aught which did not begin and end with herself. She created at first the reverse impression, as if she were spoiling for a chance of service. Though she might have been reckoned unusually passionate, truth to tell she was devoid of heart.

Her costume was perfect, no pains having been spared to turn out a masterpiece of simplicity and seductiveness. Her passive features showed no trace of anything so underbred as emotion, though she could instantly put into her eyes untold depths of feeling and tenderness. She was a model of technical chastity, and led one to believe oneself to be in the presence of a remarkably clever woman, whom one would later have discovered

to be extremely shallow. So little did she give herself away that she might have been taken for an ingénue; calculation, which was her forte, did not reveal itself. It was hard to realise that she stood for one of the strongest, subtlest, and most dangerous products of dollarism, and, though her species had no doubt existed since the world began, it would seem to have been perfected by the science of self-preservation.

“I rise,” she said, with perfect aplomb, “to make not so much a confession as a declaration, though I might have felt an impulse towards the former, did I not regard life as an affair in which each is bound never to lose a point by admission of wrong. Frankly, I envy the penitent and can imagine the relief experienced, but from the time I started on my own I have posed for a Virgin Mary, and the pleasure of evil has prospered in my hands. To explain my mental condition is beyond me, nor is there any object in discussing it. Unaided and unprompted by any, I sat down as to a game of cards, watching my chance until I had annexed most of the tricks; I also saw that to succeed the player must invariably keep cool, and that everything came to those who waited.

“My origin may to a certain extent explain the spirit which animated me. I belonged to a poor and large family, and was born with the instinct of spending money, which I set myself to acquire, being careless of any obstacle that might stand in my way. Clearly the item of a heart, being the chief hindrance to my design, had to be dispensed with. I was consumed with jealousy as

regards things objective, while the mere thought of justice in a world which permitted such differences in fortune had always appeared to me a gross satire. I studied charm as one would study music, practising several hours daily, until I became well known for my proficiency, but I bided my time and did nothing in a hurry.

“I married enormous wealth, without caring a jot for my husband, and went through the form of telling him so, conscious that this would only irritate him into a determination to compel me to care. Also my coldness made him the keener, while I was fully aware that his character was despicable, and that my living with him would soon become a formality. Events justified the plans I had laid, and I found myself in a position where none could say me nay, but where I was not once tripped up by the temptations which my detractors had prophesied would be my ruin. Naturally I divorced my husband, and, being rich and the innocent party, became a subject for widespread sympathy. The standard I adopted was a severe one, and I was looked up to as a model of outraged virtue. I married again in due course, informing my new choice, in nearly the same terms I had used before, that love was impossible to me, but that, having selected him for his probity and standing, I would consider the change of my name and the adorning of his house with my presence, on condition that no further liberties were allowed. He thought this an immense honour and went to any lengths in his worship, until I yielded and became mistress not only of a

social, but of an exclusive and intellectual world precisely to my taste.

“The wheels were perfectly oiled, and there was no question of love, while I had obtained two fortunes without having felt one spark of the divine passion. My secret was to give nothing, but I headed charity lists, and arranged my religion on highly organised business lines. I surrounded myself with men and women on the score of their notoriety, thus gaining the reputation of a collector of successes, each of whom believed that his or her speciality was the only subject which appealed to me. Undeniably such a career supplied enchantment for an epicure, yet I was careful to avoid any hint of excessive display, save on rare occasions, when the brilliance of the scene warranted a contrast to my normal Quakerism. I knew enough philosophy to avoid over-indulgence in any direction, but prolonged the sensation of my delights by moderation. Thus I left the impression of a pietist who was also a patroness of the arts, and whose mystery was increased by the interest she took in all new movements in the field of speculation.

“It did not occur to me that I was sinning, in fact the word never bothered me, and among my friends I numbered many who adored me, while my servants looked on me as a being from another world. I was great at the use of superlatives, but could become frigid instanter, knowing exactly when not to answer a letter and when to express myself in redundant language. I am conscious that men have suffered through my fas-

cination, nor did I care how long the train of victims became, but I admit, without subterfuge, that unless I could call forth homage it was a *dies non* for me. I battened on adulation, which had become my prime necessity.

“There is not much more to tell, for it would all be in the same strain, but it may interest you to know that I was personally pure as snow, and that in my inner circle were those conspicuous for eloquence or holiness, their claim on me consisting in the fact that they were conspicuous. If you ask whether, in the process, I grew fond of any, my answer is, No more than of my lap-dog, which I would have replaced at a moment’s notice. This recital is doubtless by no means pleasant hearing, but it would be wrong to conclude that I have not done my part in making the world passable. True that I took money from a beast, and from another who received no return, but I spent it better than they would have done, and my principle was to buy off the disagreeable and order fresh flowers every day. I cannot recall losing my temper, for I always had my own way, and it would be hard to bring a single witness to testify that I had given them anything but pleasure — not that I claim it as a virtue, for I detested ugliness with all the force of my being. Having developed the genius of pretending, I smoothed away the roughness not only in my own path but in that of hundreds, so that I can imagine no better scheme on which to pass a pilgrimage which, otherwise, would have been for me unbearable, and, with due deference to the supposed Arbiter of our destiny, one big mistake.”

It was not easy to associate the thought of an advocate with the prisoner, but he was less disturbed than at first seemed probable. He, too, differed from his confrères, and gave the same sense of a new world, outside the struggles of conscience or the dilemmas of honour. In sensibility there are as many varieties as in climate, so it was not surprising if his arguments were unusually incisive and frigid for a member of his profession.

“One holding your Lordship’s office, and with an atmosphere all your own, must find it difficult,” he said, “to enter into the position of the accused. Her viewpoint is radically different from yours, so that she stands at a disadvantage. Her absence of contrition has its good side, for, at any rate, there is nothing sentimental about her strict adherence to facts, and she has accurately described the situation. She can hardly be called a hypocrite, because she has shown her hand, and the supreme puzzle presented by her case is that she never conveyed the notion of badness, or tempted any to actual wrong. That she was refined, eminently spirituelle, scrupulously clean, and always ornamental, no one can gainsay; yet it is impossible to deny that her selfishness was sublime.

“I confess to having constantly been enthralled by her, and seldom left her without a grave doubt whether she did not possess the qualities of a saint. Everything about her contributed to idealism, and she was an enemy of Satan in so far as she hated dirt and all that was repugnant. Whatever the motives at the back of her

philanthropy, I contend that she did it finely and that the worship accorded her might have found a worse vent. To be interesting is a benefaction, and to remain so a triumph sometimes lacking among the pious. She always cheered, she always charmed, and she always chased away hideous facts, which were forgotten in her presence. She served as an incentive to nobler deeds than she performed, and more than one sang better, painted better, worked harder, and even climbed higher because she sent them away enthused in the direction of some great achievement. She was a living rebuke to weakness, to hung-down heads or feeble knees, and what she undertook she did so well that mere contact with her made all wish to be first in their own line.

“As I look at your Lordship’s face, I am aware that I seem over-bold, but it is to the good that the accused made the loafer heartily ashamed and determined to become something of a lion, if only to get an entrée into her society. However she may have gained her sceptre, she wielded it with dignity and acquired more power within her limits than the average queen, who seldom receives more than formal subservience. If she had a passion, it was to ‘make good,’ and, if the epidemic proved catching, the race is surely indebted to the germ carrier. Were I asked whether her phases of piety were genuine or æsthetic, I should say that, given the attainment of her heart’s desire, she preferred indulgence in abstract religion to any other. Mental gymnastics were for her caviare, and her strongest friendships were platonic, in which art I have never known her equal. It is

not so much mercy that I crave for the accused as an explanation for which I ask on her behalf, feeling assured that, though you and she are poles asunder, the love which dominates your decisions will come to the conclusion that the tragedy of her life lay in her conception of it rather than in its execution."

The following colloquy took place between the Judge and the prisoner:

"How did you, as a woman, find it possible to receive money from men whom you did not respect, let alone love?"

"I doubt if I was a 'woman,' which makes all the difference."

"Were you troubled as to the way in which the money was made, which you probably knew perfectly well?"

"I was more affected by the size than the source of the fortune."

"Would you yourself have made it by the same means, if it had been in your power?"

"Certainly not, as my good taste would have prevented me, though I did not mind receiving it as a tribute to my talents."

"Did you ever compare its value with that of honest love, which you must have recognised as the foundation of true happiness?"

"I did not hesitate as to the relative value of the two, but regarded the latter as an illusion and an overrated article."

"Then it was actually money for which you sold your soul?"

“I look on it as begging the question to assume that I had a soul to sell. What I needed and what I meant at any cost to obtain was supremacy.”

“I presume you realised that money in itself could confer none?”

“That went without saying, but, given the capital to exploit my charms, I knew that I possessed the attractions necessary to achieve the rest.”

“How low would you have stooped in your enterprise?”

“I drew the line at lowness and love-making, which I considered to be among the vulgarities.”

“How would you explain your interest in good when you had gained what constituted your throne?”

“I found pleasure in the patronage which it afforded.”

“What was your attitude towards God?”

“It served for the nearest thing to sensation of which I was capable, so long as it was philosophic, but for some reason the Gospels scared me, and I avoided reading them as opposed to my plan of living.”

“Wherein was the discrepancy most striking?”

“They were too tender for me, while I knew that if any one with a brain were to fall under the spell of their Hero, the only outcome would be to love and, loving, to lose instead of finding one’s life.”

“Then, in spirit, you deliberately crucified Him again?”

“It was a case of crucifying either Him or myself, and I chose the former.”

“And this caused you no remorse?”

“On the contrary, this decision brought me all my glory.”

“What was the chief allurement which made it easy for you to commit this moral murder?”

“I desired to be worshipped. If He or any one else came in my way, they had to go to the wall, but I must be worshipped.”

“Was this longing always with you?”

“The appetite grew by eating, until the heavens might have fallen, but I should have been undisturbed so long as men, and women, too, for the matter of that, knelt at my feet.”

“Were you particular as to their quality?”

“I waxed more so as I became more artistic.”

“Was your apparent concern with the affairs of others fictitious or real?”

“More often the first, but the second in the case of those who had won through to the top.”

“Did you help many in their projects?”

“Only if I thought they were worth while, and if I was sure of a *quid pro quo* in my association with them.”

“What reason can you give, then, for your own fastidiousness and for your shrinking from the bestial, which made you a recognised censor of morals?”

“No other than that it pleased me, that I had no desire to be confused with the common herd, and that I hated nastiness of every description.”

“And when you felt physical pain?”

“I made it as poetical as possible under the circumstances.”

“Was the pain less existent on that account?”

“If not, no one knew it; it was part of our cult to pretend bravely, and at least it sounded superior.”

“What effect on you had the misery of life and the unhappiness which you must have constantly witnessed?”

“I rebelled against them and did my best to minimise them.”

“Do you consider that your projects succeeded?”

“Better than most, and on the whole I have nothing to complain of.”

“Would you return to the same existence if you had the option?”

“Unquestionably yes, though with my present knowledge I should arrange my affairs on a larger scale and probably effect much more.”

The Judge stopped the conversation abruptly, as useless in face of such complacency. His expression conveyed less anger than despair, for he looked on the accused as one for whom punishment was meaningless, because beyond the reach of feeling. He also understood that any kindness on his part would but feed the vanity of the subject, and the coldness of the Croupière communicated itself to him, giving to his final remarks a practical tone which was the only one she could understand.

“Your case,” he said, “presents unusual difficulties, and I find my sense of judgment partially paralysed. Your name exactly describes the deadliness of your dealing with others, while you remained uncompromised except by your earlier coups. I listened with close at-

tention to your advocate's plea, but cannot endorse his remarks. The achievements of your subsequent life and the admiration you have called forth on account of your cleanness and your charity are of no value to me, since I am more interested in the why of actions than in the actions themselves. I regret to tell you that your underlying purpose has cancelled your high talking, and that your standing is that of an astute thief. Your virtue, which passed for chastity, was by no means due to your morals, but to your lack of generosity. It would have been less immoral to fulfil a bargain than to counterfeit contempt of the natural, which none knew better than yourself was involved in the signing of the contract. For this reason Circe and the courtesan are models compared to you, though in the social world, which is blinded by gold dust, you preserved to the last a reputation that avails you nothing in this place.

“Your conduct was as selfish, hard-hearted, and repellent as can be imagined, nor should I use such words if it had not been deliberate from first to last. You were guilty of a capital crime in the slaying of love, who is the only king, not because your nature made you a rebel, but because you had either to commit the crime or to share the sufferings which made him royal. This was bad enough, but, having killed him, you stripped him of his garments and wore them for your own, parading before a public all too ready to use you as an excuse for mild imitation conducted on less wicked lines.

“If you can enter into anything outside yourself, you will see that nothing more pernicious can happen to a

woman than to elect to trample on the heart, coupled with the use of feminine attractions which only excess of heart can palliate. The sphere of your influence had hardly any limit, and has done much, even in the religious world, to evolve a type which expatiates on its promises but regards its penalties as a myth. It has been instrumental in establishing what is known as 'the marriage market,' and in producing among the young those who excite to the point of surrender, without losing their heads for an instant, until they have secured a ring and its attendant advantages.

"The semblance of good which was the chief weapon in your armoury is now being commonly adopted by the lowest and most vulgar, who thereby entrap the unwary, and, what is worse, the devotional, into thinking that they have found an object for their chivalrous abandonment. This is the more painful because when a woman begins to know the value of gold, she begins to lose her sex, and if she continues in such a course her punishment is that she becomes petrified. Without failing to note the value of your refinement and your indifference to pain, I would impress on you that you can no more know the first without the second than alloy can be got rid of without fire. Hence I have denounced what to my thinking is more virulent atheism than that of many who are driven to deny God through an impotent sympathy with their fellow men. Yours creates an abomination of desolation that spoils your age and results in a cynicism calling for pitiless retribution.

"Nothing remains for you except that you be driven

from among men, that you have the heart of a beast given you for a while, which, though regrettable, is better than that of a stone; that you be deposed from your state, that your glory be taken from you, and that you be avoided by all as belonging to a lower creation, until the time comes when you lift up your eyes to heaven, when your understanding returns to you, and you discover that you are nothing. Then, but not till then, you will commence to be something, and you shall be found weeping bitterly, but the tears shall bring about your salvation in making of you a woman.

“Gradually your heart shall be reborn, and you shall eventuate the opposite of your present. Without any unnecessary relapse into the lower side, you shall bow your head to the only way, which God knew best when He made the world. You shall find that, whatever the direction of your days, which shall be arranged by your temperament, your chief characteristic shall be that of giving and then of retirement. Be content. After the transformation which I have sketched out, you will be enabled to help your family for the first time — namely, by the silence of your sacrifice.”

CHAPTER XX

THE TRAITOR — 1915 A. D.

HIS face was ashen pale, but its pallor increased as the Judge recalled some one he had seen before. The hopelessness of his expression outvied that of all who had preceded him, so that none, compared to him, deserved the term desperate. He was as one who could not be comforted, to whom pity would be the extreme of torment. Whatever evil he had been guilty of had been before Heaven, and his agony was that of the soul. This rendered it the more poignant, and it was intensified by the figure before him, whom he feared by reason of his mercy. He was the most earnest person who had stood in the dock, and he more than appreciated the crisis; for some time, in fact, he had been rehearsing it. Nothing counted for him save one face, so that the Court was reduced to a dialogue. The loneliness of the man was horrible, suggestive of the second death, which alone could describe his misery. The impression which he gave was that of a saint in purgatory. He gazed neither to the right nor to the left, but through the face before him into space; and as yet no consolation came to him from the void.

The exhibition of a man judging himself before his own

verdict was the more painful as none seemed able to prevent or alleviate it, and the tension produced was similar to that which occurs before the black cap is assumed. The self-accused became great through its very realism, but, after a while, there stole into those haunted eyes a look of gladness to think that the time of atoning had come. He rose to make his confession with the air of one who had heard several made to himself, and spoke with a reverence and humility to which he had long been accustomed. No one would have doubted but that religion was the atmosphere of his being, and the stings of remorse were felt, rather than expressed, in his words.

“I rise,” he said, “not so much to explain, seeing that you know my heart, as to condemn myself. I should merely plead guilty, if I did not hope that, by making acknowledgment of my offence, I might save others from coming to the same place. What I have done is to sell my best friend, nor did I arrive at the bargain save by degrees. The circumstances of my birth were all in my favour, and the teaching which I received was perfect. If there was any fault to find, it was that I professed too early what I had later to learn for myself. I had breathed goodness ever since I can remember, so that I thought it was my own by right, and became an adept in the use of phrases implying experiences as yet unknown.

“Mercifully, as it proved, I fell away for a time and had to discover on my own account the power of sin, from which I had persuaded myself I was immune. I had an ideal whose life spelt communion with God, so much

so that, being unable to credit her with struggles, I thought to start where she had arrived, being ignorant of the pain at the back of her piety. She passed, and the penalty of my backsliding was proportioned to my memory of her. Little did I realise how between heavenly and human love there was but the breadth of a hair. The stream, when it began to flow, became a torrent, having been dammed for years, and I found myself in the slough of despond.

“It was then I met the friend of my ideal and that he became my own. There are few enough who know the meaning of Love, but my friend personified it. None so well as he was fitted to heal one who was at the same time both holy and its converse, but as his arms were always outstretched, the breadth of it allowed for both, till the last should die away. Not one word of rebuke escaped him, not even the hint of patronage, but, taking the good for granted and the evil as non-existent, he drew me to his heart, stayed in my house, and asked me to his board. For keeping such company he was upbraided, and reports arose that he connived at my transgressions, but he was so occupied with the music of the angels that he did not hear these jarring notes. The wonder of his kindness was in its continuance, and, though the paradox in me was persistent, his conduct never changed.

“The power of human priesthoods is apt to wane and finally to disappear, but that of my friend, who held no office, remained, being exercised in one prolonged benediction. Gradually I grew to be fond of him, so fond

that, apart from him, I had no identity of my own. He soaked me with himself, and, whatever virtue or pity or zeal for salvage appeared in me, I knew it was not I, but my friend within me. The happiness of those days was indescribable, and, however dark the present gloom, nothing can rob me of their brightness. He had many others to whom he meant the same, being everything to each and regulating his favours as their faults made them need him. What he was or who he was does not matter, but I knew what he was and who he was to me. The joy of it again became my snare, as had happened to me in the case of my ideal, who was for me his under-study. I forgot to watch, and I ceased to pray, being content with his company.

“Then there came to me an angel of light by whom I was taken unawares, till he had instilled the poison of his words into my inmost soul. With the subtlety of a master in the science, he pointed out to me that my friend was too simple to succeed in saving the world, also that he was too far remote from touch to affect aught but a few among mortals. He insinuated that my friend led to building castles in Spain and to schemes which were bound to fail; that there was not sufficient discipline in his methods, and that he forgave too easily; that, in spite of his kindness, he would never exercise power unless he occupied an earthly throne and appealed to the imagination by evidence of authority other than that of washing feet. He went far to prove the beauty of a domination, with the appanage of a court, without neglecting the spirit of my friend’s example, in spite of its

grandeur. The angel of light was careful to explain to me that, though my friend had discovered a patent, it remained for others to turn it to commercial ends, which was necessary if it was not to lapse. When this system had been perfected, using the name of the patentee, the whole world, in place of a remnant, would be supplied with salvation without undue inconvenience. The climax would be reached with my friend's coronation and the adoration of mankind.

"The notion appeared to me sublime, and to one who had failed before the temptation of touch this appeal to objectivism proved irresistible. I may add that, included in the proposition was my own promotion, not so much in externals as in popular esteem, to be used, from first to last, in the cause of my friend. He promised me perceptibly less risk for my morals and a perfect machine for the exercise of my good works. By such means I should gain the ear of the high ones of the earth, until I occupied a place hardly second to them, remaining humble in private through the teaching of my friend. I saw the business in it and I succumbed. Before me floated a vision of the world swayed by a force which should be genuinely catholic, till I began to wonder how my friend could have gloried in being a fool.

"When the tempter saw I was in his toils, he naïvely added that to bring this about a small price had to be paid, and that price was merely to sell my friend. When I demurred, he said that my friend had a penchant for pain, and that the base of his philosophy was the shed-

ding of his blood. Deftly weaving his snares, this devil drew me on by persuasion that history was not recurrent, that no harm could accrue to my friend, and that the transaction between me and himself with closed doors was but a formality. The scales were turned when he touched on my increased power for good in the new régime, and, before I knew it, the bond was sealed. I had sold my friend, just as literally as did my prototype from Kerioth centuries ago.

“Then came a moment of reaction such as only the gods can solve. My friend, from whom nothing was hid, gave me one last chance. He collected us together, and his sadness told me that he felt the future, as well as grappled with the present. He even showed me special deference, but, when I left the room, he pleaded with the least tinge of satire for no delay, though so courteous was he to the last that he allowed it to be mistaken for my share in his affairs. The rest easily followed after I had dared to break bread with my friend, though I knew him conscious of my design. To betray him was not difficult, for I knew his habits, and also that, though he might invoke countless hosts on his behalf, so meek was he that he would prove a ready victim. Soon enough, as aforetime, he was crowned, though it was holden from me that he was never more a king than when he bowed his head. My friend was killed, and to me was given the price, with the curt remark that, so far as my feelings were concerned, that was my affair. It was I who murdered him, and it was I who loved him. Do with me what you will.”

The advocate was silent.

“Tell me,” said the Judge, “to what do you attribute your treachery?”

“To a force wholly beyond me.”

“Did your friend ever warn you that this force was abroad?”

“He often warned me.”

“What made you join the band of which he was the chief?”

“Nothing short of it could satisfy me after having known him through my ideal, and then for myself.”

“Did you do him good service during that halcyon time?”

“Yes, but it was a dangerous one, being concerned more with things than with souls.”

“What was your special charge?”

“We had to collect enough to live on, until our daily needs obsessed me, and it seemed that we should have to break up unless our organisation was perfect.”

“How did the company which gathered round your friend get on together?”

“When he was present, well; but when he was absent the passion for precedence set in.”

“How was this possible in face of his teaching?”

“We did not apply it.”

“How was it that his words produced their effect?”

“He spoke like no other man.”

“What sort of following did he gain?”

“The common people heard him gladly.”

“For whom did he care most?”

“For the riffraff.”

“Was he ever angry?”

“Very seldom.”

“How did he deal with the fallen?”

“He raised them.”

“How with the blind?”

“He opened their eyes.”

“How with the dumb?”

“He caused them to speak.”

“How with the lepers?”

“He cleansed them.”

“How with an adulteress?”

“He honoured her.”

“How with the rich?”

“He pitied them.”

“How with the Pharisees?”

“He flayed them.”

“How with his accusers?”

“He was silent.”

“Where is your friend now?”

“Everywhere.”

“Have you been to others to get relief since the night when it was dark?”

“To more than one.”

“What was their treatment?”

“Some advised that I should be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that my spirit might eventually be saved.”

“Who first said that?”

“One who called himself the chief of sinners.”

“Surely he must have forgotten the clothes which were cast at his feet.”

“I have since thought so, and that is why they could not help me.”

“Did you go to others?”

“They hinted at over-sensitiveness, and that I might still make it up to my friend by publishing his name.”

“And others?”

“They were so occupied with preparing stained-glass windows to perpetuate my friend’s memory that they paid me no attention.”

“And others?”

“Their whole time was taken up with reconstructing the form which my friend came to abolish.”

“And others?”

“They were quarrelling among themselves as to what my friend meant, so they did not hear my cry.”

“How was it that for the most part none could console you?”

“Few were as bad as I, with my knowledge, had been, so they could not understand.”

“Why did you not work out your own sorrow?”

“It was not godly sorrow.”

“Did the world forgive you?”

“They greeted me as a recruit, but I could not forgive myself.”

“Did you not know that your friend would have forgiven you?”

“That was the agony of it, but I had to hear it from his own lips.”

“And your sorrow now?”

“I know nothing save that I have sold my friend.”

“What have you done with the reward of your treachery?”

“It became as Dead Sea fruit to my taste.”

“Would you serve your friend again if you had another chance?”

“I am not worthy.”

“Do you believe now in the vision which was brought before your eyes?”

“I know that it was a mirage.”

“What force, in your opinion, can alone save the world?”

“My friend.”

“But if he was killed?”

“He can never die.”

“But in hell, which he came to destroy?”

“He is felt there more vividly than anywhere else.”

“Would you say that you were there now?”

“I am, and I am not.”

“Are you content to go back there?”

“I am indifferent, so long as I can see my friend.”

“Have you anything more to say on your own behalf?”

“Nothing.”

The face of the Judge was drawn but radiant, and he was glad to see once more features which were familiar. Down his cheeks coursed tears as the truth became patent that each act of simplicity invites one of subtlety, and that Judas is a shadow cast by the light of Jesus.

Every thought was lost in that of winning back the Traitor to what he used to be, and what he really was. He caught at even the act of his friend in entrusting the accused with the source of sustenance as at a straw, and resolved to save this man from the depths of the sea.

“Before I pronounce your sentence, I wish to welcome you home again, and to thank you for the work you did before you sold your friend, that I find placed to your credit. I cannot say whether I rightly understand the meanderings of your mind through which all this came about, but I know that I love you. Also I know that, though at the last every ray was obscured, the sunset is not the day. It is not for me to adopt the rôle of the inquisitor or to keep you on the rack; only men do that. My province is rather to forgive all from the moment they love again, whether it take a day or a thousand years. It is sufficient for the purposes of this Court that the best be awakened, after which the prisoners pass beyond the jurisdiction of the Judge, whose office is to bind them back to God.

“I know, without your telling me, that your fear of those who love your friend is greater than that which you feel as regards your friend himself. All in good time they will learn that no man has a right to judge, and that, though you did a deadly wrong, they also caused him no small grief. They, too, were ashamed of him; when it came to his trial they could not afford to know him and, without exception, forsook him and fled. Any hurt which was done in loyalty of zeal was

healed by your friend himself, so they may be comforted at the thought of a mercy which is everlasting. Some day to these companions you shall be reunited, when they shall have foregone all precedence and have become like the little children whom your friend used to take up in his arms and bless.

“They shall find in your friend’s new kingdom many another band, as yet unknown to them, whom he loves though they call him by another name. It will be as though there was one flock and your friend will be the shepherd of them all. Many of those who professed devotion to your friend, but nothing more, will also be there, when they, too, shall have got to know him, but at the time they knew not what they did. There shall be no need of food there, for they shall feed on your friend and be satisfied. The light shall cast no shadow there, for it shall be in mid-heaven, and its brightness will come from your friend’s face. The danger of objectivism shall be unknown there, where the spirit shall be supreme, and the need of organisation shall cease to exist where Love impels all. It shall there be found that the saints were those who made a covenant with God with sacrifice, whether at the eleventh hour, or at the dawning of their day. All the other prisoners who were broken on the wheel shall be there, and each shall be employed as best suits the being given to them at their birth, and mended by their martyrdom before their arrival.

“The tempter’s lie was a half truth, which is the worst of all, when he said that your friend was destined to

reign. Of the area or fabric of his dominion either he had no conception, or he so feared it that he suborned the servants of your friend to proclaim it as natural and defined. You said your friend was everywhere, but there will come a time when he, too, will retire in favour of God Himself, who is all in all, but whose Love is such that for a little while He became your friend, the better to make His glory bearable, and to prepare you for eternity in His presence.

“You may think I have forgotten your sentence, but you have served most of it in the hell through which you have already passed. In that new kingdom that you did your best to frustrate, you shall no longer keep the bag, but, till you learn to prefer the lowest place, you shall keep the door. The penalty of seeing your ideal but afar off, and of being debarred from the active business of the King, will meet the case of him who sold his saviour. When patience shall have had her perfect work, and when you shall want nothing, you shall be summoned by your friend. Full opportunity shall be given you of repaying the thirty pieces of silver with more than compound interest. It still remains for you to undergo a greater punishment than has yet been meted out to any. Come hither and receive it.”

The prisoner, by this time livid but triumphant, approached the chair and knelt down. The Judge kissed the Traitor.

ENVOI

IT IS a relief when the Court has risen and the work of the day is done. The kindest Magistrate must be glad to forget the sadness and dilemmas with which he has been dealing, but the best of them arrive at the conclusion that they have had to do rather with invalids than with the designedly bad. To many, doubtless, it must partake of a routine, or the strain would be unbearable; but their faces tell of a sympathy they cannot disguise, and their whole being becomes suffused with a pitifulness unknown to ordinary men. It is a tribute to our advance in humaneness that this type should have become so taken for granted that the reverse is exceptional, and it is refreshing to find that the poor resort to them for advice in practical affairs as much as if not more than to the parson. The parable speaks for itself, to the effect that any one who looks into his own nature must feel his brotherhood with all who have been found out. The sense of contempt, or even of distance between the discovered and the undiscovered, is disappearing, and, in its place, there is a general admission that the germ of the same tendencies exists in all. Certainly public opinion is vastly more considerate than it used to be, and, however gloomy the view taken by pessimists, every thinking person must be convinced

that the fellowship of man is being better understood.

On the other hand, with this advance in charity and in the recognition of the oneness of life, there is an undeniable danger to the laws of logic. Some would go so far as to say that the loss of hell fire has grave disadvantages, and it is a question if, in ceasing to be frightened of God, the race is not inclined to doubt His existence. As usual, the truth will be found midway, and it were wise, while abandoning doctrines at the thought of which we shudder, to keep a firm hold on the need of chastening, for which we learn to bless God more than for His favours. No greater fallacy can obtain than that judgment is avoidable, and the philosophy to which we are coming aims at a combination of Love and Truth. Some day we shall find that they are the same word, while, in the scenes depicted, we have witnessed them to perfection in the Judge. He, at least, is not subject to the claims either of fatigue or formality, and it is good to know that we have to do with a power which has been translated for mortals in the person of a Brother. The whole affair is deprived of melancholy, for, without burking facts, the impression left is one of limitless hope and of thankfulness at the methods portrayed.

The habit of slurring over what offends the taste is akin to that of hiding a coffin under flowers, and the brave man will prefer to have it out, not only with himself, but with the evils of his day. If the good are the salt of the earth, it becomes their vocation to be sprinkled among the weeds, and a protest may be allowed at the

prevailing inclination to "cellars," which may adorn the table and improve the food of a few. The excuse may be alleged that the salt is apt to lose its pungency and to become fitter for the dunghill unless the atoms are constantly collected to regain their savour, but no one can deny that the accepted theory of virtue is too often associated with cowardice. The contention of the author is that the officially religious are almost entirely unconcerned with the issues of daily existence, and that, until the godlike of the race dare to live in the world without being of it, no reformation on a large scale can be expected.

Let it be conceded that there is as much risk in the rescue of a soul as in that of a drowning man, and the majority will at once own that few of them have ever jumped overboard. To do so without being an expert swimmer would be the act of a lunatic, and, even when in the water, their prowess would often fail them unless they carried with them a life-buoy. It goes without saying that the heroes who descend into a mine to save their comrades not only hold their lives in their hands, but, when they are brought up in the cage, bear traces of their venture underground. No result would have been achieved, however, if they had remained on the top and preserved their appearance at the expense of the dead.

The foregoing attempt to bring scenes which are going on every day at our very doors, before the best and the most sympathetic, is a challenge to those who, either through ignorance or timidity, affect indifference. The Judge was by no means exclusive, and, if he had lived in

a glass case, would never have been the prisoners' friend. That it may involve being called names and that stones may easily be thrown is natural, but the crown of our Faith is that it culminates in One who was not only holy but fraternal.

Let there be no misunderstanding as to the separation necessary for those who would not degenerate, but the entire notion of being set apart for the highest purposes is defeated by the idealist who forgets that the value of such carefulness is his better equipment to help his generation. That generation is made up of millions to whom the thought of inspiration is a dead letter which it is his business to quicken. The patience and recklessness requisite speak for themselves; and, though it is eminently necessary for him to be armed, *cui bono* if he does not enter the conflict?

The object of this book is to leave the reader impressed with the duty which he owes to his brother man, without for one moment underrating the dangers which threaten association with the world. It will have done something if it serves to break down the barriers of prejudice, and to dissipate the gloom which, at times, hangs over goodness like a pall. It is not advisable that the uninitiated should have their eyes opened without consummate care, or undertake burdens until they are ready to bear them, but no character can be rightly called "religious" until he has grasped the root meaning of the term, which is the rejoining of all and every to the Source of their being. To accomplish this he must cease to talk of flowers, or, at least, he must remember

that thornless roses are freaks in horticulture. In a word, there is no lack of anguish or of sin, but the art of life is to take a leaf from the Judge's book, to face the same and woo its victims back to their best, instead of dragooning them into despair, or leaving them to perish by the way.

The interest of the trials is chiefly to be found in their outcome, and the gist of the proceedings lies in the remedies suggested by the Judge. Naturally the metaphors cannot be too closely analysed, and full play must be allowed for a poet's fancies, but it is sufficient if the truth be brought home that every reader has his chance, here and now, of repairing the past. The whole scheme would fail if such a hope were merely a pious opinion, but the writer holds it to be profoundly true that every human quality contains the elements of its opposite. Godly revenge is denied to none, and no greatness has ever been achieved save through some correction. Again and again we require to be broken up if we are to be mended, but before the process can take place, the glass must be held up to us and we must see ourselves. After that, given such a friend as presided over the Court, no one on earth need fail, but until each does battle with his besetment, nothing has happened,— just as if one suffering from cancer were to hide the fact, but to take every means as regards his health in all other particulars. Happy beyond words must the prisoner be who, after exposing his shame, or having had it exposed, finds in the Judge both surgeon and physician, who never lost a patient and never took a fee.

The humour which obtains, even in the dock, is no mere effort to adopt a lighter side from an artistic stand-point, since, fortunately, laughter plays its part in our passage through the world. Without humour madness would be the rule and not the exception, and there are plenty of people, hardly to be ranked among the pious, to whom great gratitude is due for having added to the general gladness. Bad times we may and ought to have, but there is a vast amount of happiness, and something is wrong if fun is not to the fore. Our friend with the cancer has a better chance of surviving if, whatever he may have to endure, he maintains his cheerfulness. When oil and wine were poured into the wounds of the poor fellow in the ditch, the first no doubt was intended to soothe, and the second to make him smile. There is a deal of human nature in everybody; and, if the choice arose between a good doctor with bad spirits and a bad doctor with good spirits, many would select the latter, and would quite likely prove to be wise.

The sequence preserved in the cases recorded is not accidental. When the Great Teacher reduced the mystery of conversion to being born again, He implied that the most accurate term would have been reversion to that from which each started. The effort of the Judge was, in nearly every instance, to recall the magic of earlier years, for which reason he was insistent in his references to home. It would appear that to become healed is a simpler process than is often taught, and that, without losing ourselves in the intricacies of theology, we should humbly strive once more to occupy the

nursery. There is little difference between the prisoners, though their settings vary, but the prevalence of ego, whatever direction it took, accounts for their leaving the high road. That the temptations of each are so different that what is poison to one may be meat to another is shown on every page, but the conclusion from which no one can escape is that the lips of each must, sooner or later, formulate the word "*Peccavi*," after which, and only after which, the Judge closes the affair with the answer, "*Pax tecum*."

THE END



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